

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: EXERCISING SOCIAL CLASS PRIVILEGE:
EXAMINING THE PRACTICES AND PROCESSES
DEFINING UPPER-MIDDLE CLASS SWIMMING
CLUB CULTURE

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Cultural theorist Pierre Bourdieu argues that social class is defined by the interplay and operation of various forms of capital and, as such, is thought to be a significant determinant of an individual's everyday experiences, understandings, and identities. He believes that participation in private sport communities, such as swimming clubs, can contribute to one's social standing by positioning "the body-for-others," distinguishing those maintaining a privileged lifestyle, and transferring valuable skills, characteristics, and social connections to children for the purposes of class reproduction (Bourdieu, 1978, p. 838). Drawing on these ideas, this research explores the inter-related social constructs of the physically active swimming body, family, and social class at the Valley View Swim and Tennis Club (a pseudonym), a private recreational swim club in an upper-middle class suburban town on the outskirts of a major mid-Atlantic city. Through four years of ethnographic engagement, including participatory lived

experience, observations, and interviews with mothers and children who belong to the pool, this project examines the way in which membership at Valley View plays an integral role in daily and family lives. Invoking Bourdieu (1978, 1984, 1986), I argue that pool participation is illustrative of members taken for granted, lived experience of power and privilege. Valley View operates as a distinctive consumption choice offering families a strategic opportunity to promote, demonstrate, convert, and transmit their varied levels of capital in and through their children, with the goal of expressing distinction now, and reproducing their familial social class position for future generations. Specifically, from the maternal perspective, this research discusses how the pool functions as a physical space for children's acquisition of physical capital and the tools to live a healthy, physically active lifestyle emblematic of social class position; details the way in which pool participation is a constitutive element of the upper-middle class family habitus, and thus offers parents an opportunity to teach their children valuable social and cultural dispositions; examines how Valley View provides children with enriching, intangible experiences characteristic of their class-based privilege; and lastly, explores how club membership is an important feature of these mother's privileged everyday daily lives.

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UPPER-MIDDLE CLASS SWIMMING CLUB CULTURE

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Introduction

Fatalities due to drowning are the second-leading cause of unintentional death in children under the age of 14 (Center for Disease Control (CDC), 2008). In addition, between the ages of five and 14, African American children are 3.2 more times likely to drown than white children their age, and report the lowest swimming ability of any ethnic grouping (CDC, 2008; Gilchrist, Sacks, & Branche, 2000). Further, economically and socially underdeveloped areas have higher rates of drowning fatalities with minorities disproportionately affected (Hastings, Zahran, & Cable, 2006; Saluja et al., 2006), and low income children also report a higher fear of swimming (Irwin, Irwin, Ryan, & Drayer, 2009). Conversely, in middle and upper-middle class areas which feature a more advanced economic infrastructure, leisure time, and disposable income, individuals engage in swimming participation much more frequently, tend to report a greater comfort in water, and have much lower rates of drowning due to facility access and instruction (Hastings et al., 2006; Irwin et al., 2009; Saluja et al., 2006). These astounding statistics indicate a very real socio-culturally contingent public health problem demanding attention as factors such as social class position, racial difference, and the family can influence swimming ability, yet little is known about how these constructions impact participation (CDC, 2008; Hastings et al., 2006; Irwin et al., 2009).

Swimming, as both a sport and recreational pursuit, is shaped by a history of race and class-based exclusivity (Hastings et al., 2006; Wiltse, 2007). Due to a fear of white and black people swimming in the same venue, Wiltse (2007) argues that racial

integration of public pools was “a direct and immediate cause” of private pool construction, exclusive membership, and swimming clubs (p. 180). Many Americans had a “desire to recreate within more socially selective communities,” and belonging to a club “ensured that other swimmers would be of the same social class and race” (Wiltse, 2007, p. 183). Therefore, neighborhood, community, and club pools were built as a means of social segregation, while at the same time functioned to promote property values, provide summer activities for children, and eventually became an integral feature of affluent developments (Slear, 2007, Wiltse, 2007)¹. Swimming, along with other physical cultural pursuits such as golf, tennis, and skiing, generally has “more hidden entry requirements, such as family tradition and early training, or the obligatory manner (of dress and behavior), and socializing techniques, which keep these sports closed to the working class” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 217). Further, sports such as these require a larger economic investment, and tend to be constituted by the possession of greater levels of cultural, social, and physical capital (Bourdieu, 1978, 1980, 1984). Accordingly, swimming is more prevalent among affluent, white families, and often takes place in private, restricted venues with specific individuals, and thus is illustrative of a privileged social class position (Bourdieu, 1978, 1980, 1984; Wiltse, 2007). Not only do more economically stable areas have greater access to recreational swimming, but they also feature more organized youth programs as the majority of competitive youth swimmers come from white families with married parents holding secure jobs, and maintaining physically active lifestyles (Dukes & Coakley, 2002; Irwin et al., 2009).

¹ As is particularly the case in the community where Valley View is located (Slear, 2007).

Access to routine physical activity participation, be it swimming or otherwise, represents a healthy lifestyle practice, however, often is produced through unacknowledged institutions of privilege in affluent communities (Cockerham, 2005; Messner, 2009; Williams, 1995). Healthy lifestyles tend to afford “people more control over their life situation” as they live longer and feel more empowered over their own ability to control their well-being (Cockerham, 2005, p. 52). Further, healthy lifestyles allow people to experience greater success in “establishing and maintaining a set of ‘healthy’ thoughts, feelings and acts” (Korp, 2008, p. 23). Swimming participation contributes to the development of a healthy lifestyle, and the accompanying healthy swimming body serves as a marker of more affluent, dominant groups in society (Korp, 2008).

Social class position has the potential to shape not only healthy lifestyle practices, but also everything from language and etiquette to sport and leisure participation, and therefore has very real implications on one’s life experience (Bourdieu, 1984). Cultural theorist Pierre Bourdieu argues that social class is defined by the interplay and operation of various forms of capital, and as such, is thought to be a significant determinant of an individual’s everyday experiences, understandings, and identities. Invoking Bourdieu, this dissertation, developed through four years of ethnographic research, seeks to understand the regimes of power and privilege that operate within the private, upper-middle class pool club environment. Specifically, this project aims to further the understanding of the connection between upper-middle class culture, family life, and swimming participation through an explication of the

empirical characteristics and distinguishing expressions of privilege defining the lives of the Valley View Swim and Tennis Club member families (a pseudonym). Explicitly, from the maternal perspective, the following explores how upper-middle class families use the pool during the summer months as a physical space to facilitate the embodied performance, expression, and subsequent reproduction of social class privilege in and through their children. Accordingly, the research questions guiding this investigation are as follows:

1. How does the pool operate as a site of class-based power relations?
2. How can classed, gendered, and raced bodies be understood at Valley View?
3. How does membership at Valley View facilitate the reproduction of social class privilege in and through children?
 - a. How is the conversion, transmission, and interplay of capitals manifest in member families interactions and behaviors?
4. How is membership at Valley View integrated into daily and family lives/lifestyles?
 - a. Can individual behaviors be understood in relation to the upper-middle class habitus?
 - b. Can family practices be understood as part of a family habitus?
 - c. How does Valley View provide a parenting opportunity?
5. How does pool participation contribute to the development of a class-based healthy lifestyle?

In order to answer these questions, this dissertation contextualizes the lives of Valley View members by articulating how their class-based culture and lifestyle practices are connected to the broader social structure of which they are a part. Culture refers to the way in which “social groups develop distinct patterns of life, and give *expressive form* to their social and material life-experience. Culture is the way, the forms, in which groups ‘handle’ the raw material of their social and material existence” (Clarke, Hall, Jefferson, & Roberts, 1975, p. 10, emphasis in original). Therefore, to study culture, it is imperative to understand meaning embodied in lived experience as it shapes a way of life (Williams, 1961). Williams (1961) explains:

there is the ‘social’ definition of culture, in which culture is a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour. The analysis of culture, from such a definition, is the clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life, a particular culture. (p. 41)

Thus culture, and as it relates to this project, *physical culture*, locates embodied practices in the wider social context of which they are apart, and is continually impacted by power relations structuring meaning and ways of life (Andrews, 2002, 2006, 2008; Andrews & Giardina, 2008; Grossberg, 2006; Kirk, 1999). It is important to stress that context is “not something *out there*, within which practices occur or which influence the development of practices. Rather, *identities, practices, and effects generally, constitute the very context within which they are practices, identities or effects*” (Slack, 1996, p. 125, emphasis in original). A cultural form cannot “be defined independently of its existence within the context. An event or practice...does not exist apart from the forces of the context that constitute it as what it is” (Grossberg, 1997, p. 255; see also Hall,

1980). Similarly, “the body cannot be understood independently of its embeddedness in socio-ecological processes. If, as many now argue, the body is a social construct, then it cannot be understood outside of the forces that swirl around it and construct it” (Harvey, 2000, p. 16; see also Ingham, 1997). Accordingly, Physical Cultural Studies (PCS) seeks to understand the way embodied dispositions and cultural physicalities are articulated to larger social structures, as nothing exists outside of the context which gives them meaning (Andrews, 2002). Therefore this research attempts to construct a detailed understanding of the mutually constitutive social structures of which Valley View and its members are a part. Specifically, this project develops an ethnographic examination of the lived reality of pool members, bringing together the conceptual and empirical in order to adequately practice PCS (Grossberg, 2006). Following Shilling (2003), the goal of this dissertation is to develop an empirically grounded, theoretically informed, and methodologically rigorous approach to understanding the embodied practices, performances, and expressions that facilitate the subsequent reproduction of social class privilege in and through the Valley View families. The following discusses the significance of this project, both the theory and method supporting this research, and details the empirical chapters resulting from this investigation.

Significance

This project is unique in that there has not been any previous research investigating the intersection between social class, family, and swimming. However, there has been academic work considering parental support of age group swimming (e.g. Dukes & Coakley, 2002; Power & Woolger, 1994), examining attrition in youth

swimming (e.g. Gould, Feltz, Horn, & Weiss, 1985), understanding the myths effecting minority swimming participation (e.g. Irwin et al., 2009), drowning inequalities based on race and class (e.g. Hastings et al., 2006), and the history of swimming and pools in the U.S. (e.g. Wiltse, 2007). Yet we do not have a comprehensive understanding of how familial status and social class impact swimming participation. Irwin et al. (2009) found that the family is one of the biggest influences on swimming participation and calls for more research to investigate this link. Some work has alluded to youth sport as a family affair (Chafetz & Kotarba, 1995; Coakley, 2004, 2006; Harrington, 2006; Messner, 2009; Murphy, 1999; Kay, 2000, 2006a, 2006b, 2007; Sabo & Veliz, 2008; Swanson 2003; Thompson, 1999), nevertheless, very little is known about how families implement physical activity into their lives (MacDonald et al., 2004). Further, the appropriation of leisure and recreational spaces to facilitate family relationships has been cited as an area that is understudied, but critical to develop a contextual view of family activities as there is not much literature that frames sport, physical activity, and/or recreation as a way of “doing” or “being” a family, or contributing in a major way to family life (Coakley, 2006; DeVault, 2000, 2003; Harrington, 2006; Kay, 2006b; LaRossa, 2005b; Sabo & Veliz, 2008; Shaw, 1992). Research on families and physical activity is significant as it can be one way that families spend “family time,” a concept which has also received very little academic attention (Daly, 1996, 2001; LaRossa, 2005b). Daly (1996) advocates qualitative approaches investigating how family time is experienced, and DeVault (2003) further urges that there should be a “genuine engagement and integration” of children, women, and context when studying families (p. 1296). This project draws on these gaps

in literature and calls for research, and accordingly develops a contextual view of the relationship between family, swimming, and social class at Valley View.

Additionally, class-based differences in physical activity patterns are not well understood (Ball, Salmon, Giles-Corti, & Crawford, 2006), nor is the ideology behind healthy lifestyles (Cockerham, 2005). There is little work that attempts to theorize the relationship between social class and health (Williams, 1995), yet there is a clear link as health and family structure tend to be stronger and more stable at higher economic levels (Denton & Walters, 1999). Research and subsequent knowledge about participation in various types of physical activity is becoming increasingly more important in the effort to fully understand all aspects of the “obesity crisis.” Currently, the medical community reveals quantitative statistics about children’s weight, body mass index (BMI), and nutrient consumption, however the social implications (or perhaps the moral panic) surrounding this growing problem are rarely addressed. Regardless of the severity of this problem, Dagkas and Stathi (2007) argue that “understanding the factors that affect young people’s participation in physical activity is of great importance” due to a high “prevalence of health-related diseases” (p. 370). Many professionals claim that children who get involved in physically active pursuits at a young age are more likely to continue their athletic participation later on in life (Duncan, Woodfield, Al-Nakeeb, & Nevill, 2002). Therefore, the more we can understand about a familial emphasis on sport participation and how and why children and families participate in physical activity, the closer we are to comprehending the scope of this issue.

Mentioned above, this research will be supported using Bourdieu's ideas on social class, an influence that is essential for a few reasons. Bourdieu was one of the first to investigate the interrelationships between sport, society, and social class, and there has not been much academic work done on this topic though it is important (Washington & Karen, 2001). Washington and Karen (2001) state that social class is crucial "to understand what connects particular groups of people to particular sports activities and what role these play in the reproduction of inequality in a given society" (p. 190). Further, Harvey and Sparks (1991, p. 176) argue that research should "provide a detailed account of existing forces in play in a given field of social life in order to map out how different practices obtain distinctive meanings and values" for particular social class groupings, something this project does. Bourdieu's work also emphasizes the corporeal dimension of everyday life as he details the relationship between the possession of capital, and the instrumental, class-based associations individuals have with their bodies (Atkinson & Wilson, 2002; Bourdieu, 1984; Harvey & Sparks, 1991; Shilling, 2003). Bourdieu's corporeal focus is central to this project as a whole, and more broadly to its place in PCS. Further, Bourdieu's work is useful in understanding the relationship between health and lifestyles (Abel, 2008; Cockerham, 2005; Korp, 2008; Williams, 1995). Williams (1995) asserts that social class has a powerful, yet unacknowledged impact on "health, patterns of food consumption and participation in exercise and sporting activities" (p. 600). Ultimately Bourdieu's theorizing regarding tastes and lifestyles is useful in understanding how an individual's class status mediates their relationship with their own body.

In addition to Bourdieu's influence, this project is significant due its emphasis on affluent cultures and the transmission of social class privilege. In the U.S. there is an increasing gap between the rich and poor, yet "the conditions of affluence and poverty that variously shape life in the United States have rarely been part of a sustained or routine public discourse" (Pascale, 2008, p. 346). Effectively social class groupings with more resources and capital at their disposal have been marginalized in academic research, and according to Kenny (2000), middle classes thrive on *not* being recognized. This is ironic as middle and upper-middle class Americans account for a large part of the overall population, approximately 44% (Gilbert, 2008), and given this statistic, it seems reasonable to learn more about the practices and processes structuring the lifestyles of privileged individuals and families. Further, Lamont (1992) advocates more empirically-based research examining how social class is recognized by all groups. Gaining a better perspective of the cycle class reproduction at any socio-economic status level, in any cultural grouping, contributes to a broader understanding and knowledge of this idea more generally. Many people hold preconceived notions about what it means to be upper-middle class, however this research yielded many unexpected findings about the Valley View families. This fact is important as PCS scholarship should be "committed to telling us things we don't already know," and further, research should not be undertaken if findings can be pre-empted (Grossberg, 2006, p. 6).

Lastly, there is an overall lack of academic inquiry into the relationship between swimming, or more broadly, physical activity, and issues of gender and race/ethnicity, interconnections which this investigation touches upon. Recreation, sport, and/or

leisure can “help to create sex difference, racial inequality, and class distinction” (Messner, 2009, p. 205). The family involvement exhibited at Valley View has implications for the reproduction of traditional gender roles in young children, as well as the development of gendered relationships, bodies, and identities that form among the children, adolescents, and adults over the course of the summer at the pool. There is also a clear link between leisure and physical activity, and the social constructs of race and privilege, an important area of inquiry that is worthy of investigation (Shinew et al., 2006). Valley View, a semi-private restricted space that costs money to belong, is a vehicle responsible for the reproduction of whiteness and social segregation. Hartigan (1997) advocates studies of whiteness, particularly in reference to its relationship to social class and “place-specific” subjects (p. 497). This type of research has the potential to breakdown walls constructing white privilege as it helps clarify the way “systems of domination co-construct one another, and how we are ‘enlisted,’ materially and ideologically, in their continued operation” (Frankenberg, 1994, p. 75). Understanding all of these inequalities and power relations present at Valley View is very important as involvement in various sport communities is widespread.

Theoretical Framework

Mentioned above, this research has appropriated French cultural theorist Pierre Bourdieu’s ideas on social class, in order to understand the operation of class-based power and privilege at the Valley View Swim and Tennis Club. Bourdieu’s work considers the relationship between corporeality, sport participation, and social class location, and posits that the body is an emblematic, constitutive depiction of social

inequalities (Harvey & Sparks, 1991; Shilling, 2003). Bourdieu's focus on human embodiment resonates with the PCS imperative to develop a "contextually based understanding of the corporeal practices, discourses, and subjectivities through which active bodies become organized, represented, and experienced in relation to the operations of social power" (Andrews, 2008, p. 55). Accordingly, Bourdieu's theories regarding social class have been an invaluable framework to guide this ethnographic investigation (for a more comprehensive literature and theoretical review than is included in this introduction, consult appendix A).

Field, Habitus, and Capital

Bourdieu argues that social class is constructed through the dialectical relationship between field, habitus, and capital, and when taken together, accounts for all types of "social practices and representations" occurring in a particular context (Wacquant, 1989, p. 44). Fields, or fields of cultural production, are the "social space of objective relationships," or fluid contexts where individuals and their social positions interact (Bourdieu, 1985a, p. 16). Bourdieu reveals that fields are the "critical mediation between the practices of those who partake of it and the surrounding social and economic conditions" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 105). They are networks or systems of relations that structure social positions of power within which agents attempt to maintain or improve their social status (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Wacquant, 1989). Fields are defined by particular contexts, such as sport and/or leisure, and therefore members belong to a particular field due to a shared, common belief for the field itself (DeFrance, 1995).

The field of production is responsible for one's embodied habitus as it is "'at home' in the field it inhabits," and it is perceived "immediately as endowed with meaning and interest" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 128). Therefore to study a field, it is necessary to analyze the habitus of the agents in the field as there is an "ontological complicity" that exists through bodies and institutions (Wacquant, 1989, p. 56; see also Bourdieu, 1984, Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Class habitus is a durable system of structuring tastes and preferences for certain practices and dispositions which contribute to the development of a particular, classifiable lifestyle, and is acquired through personal understanding of one's actual social, cultural, and economic status (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984). One's habitus "provides individuals with class-dependent, pre-disposed, yet seemingly 'naturalised' ways of thinking, feeling, acting and classifying the social world and their location within it" (Williams, 1995, p. 586). Bourdieu explains that one's class habitus contributes to endowing a field with "sense and value" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 127), and operates as the general formula of lifestyle influencing class-based practices and behaviors, and thus it characterizes distinctive lifestyles based on social position (Bourdieu, 1980). One's habitus will find a sense of matching in others with a similar habitus, and this affinity structures social relationships, constructing a taken for granted world which appears natural, however is based on social position (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1989). By way of habitus, one's practices and consumption of cultural goods unconsciously become "harmonized" with their class status and bring an individual a sense of distinction (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 80; see also 1984). Thus, distinctive lifestyle behaviors and taste, the art of differentiating, are products of one's habitus

(Bourdieu, 1967, 1984). Bourdieu believes “that the body is the most indisputable materialization of class taste” (1984, p. 190), and describes habitus as an *embodied* disposition responsible for distinguishing social class position (Bourdieu, 1978, 1984, 1985a). Habitus is made clear through a class-based “relation to the body at its deepest and most unconscious level, i.e. body schema, which is the depository of a whole world view and a whole philosophy of the person and the body” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 218). The body serves as a social product as even the most insignificant details of corporeal representation can reveal how people treat and relate to their bodies, thereby demonstrating their distinctive social status and class habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1978, 1984; Shilling, 1991).

Bourdieu argues that an individual’s position in a field, demonstrated through their embodied habitus, is related to their distribution of power, or “specific capital” (Wacquant, 1989, p. 40; see also Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu’s understanding of social class relies on the idea that the accumulation of capital can distinguish lifestyles in subtle, but meaningful ways, as capital is the “generative formula of the habitus” (1984, p. 208). Capital becomes valuable when agents recognize its meaning and consequently utilize it to define the structure of the field (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986). Bourdieu (1986) describes capital as either materialized, objectified, or embodied, and notes that it accumulates over time, and has the “potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form, contains a tendency to persist in its being, is a force inscribed in the objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible” (p. 241). The ability to convert,

transmit, and/or reproduce different types of capital ensures its reproduction (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986).

Bourdieu (1980, 1984, 1986) discusses three major forms of capital: economic, social, and cultural. First, economic capital is recognized as a sign of distinction and refers to financial status, wealth, assets, and the time and money to devote to leisure pursuits (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986). Various forms of capital can be derived from economic capital, and therefore it has the ability to transform into different types (including cultural, social, and physical) (Bourdieu, 1986). Secondly, social capital refers to the social network, prestige, and authority that an individual demonstrates through peers, friends, and skills. This capital functions as a ““credential”” offering agents access to a specific set of social contexts depending on the size of their network (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 249). Bourdieu (1986) explains that social capital has a “multiplier effect” (p. 249) on one’s collective capital, but to maximize its benefit, requires “an unceasing effort of sociability” (p. 250) in order to maintain and increase this capital. And thirdly, cultural capital refers to the culturally valued tastes and consumption patterns an individual accumulates through their social standing. Cultural capital is gained “quite unconsciously,” and often times is unrecognized as capital but rather as a “legitimate competence” bringing those who possess it distinction (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 245). Cultural capital “is linked to the body and presupposes embodiment,” and is augmented through time “invested” on the part of the individual to cultivate the body in a certain way (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244). Accordingly, Bourdieu alludes to a crucial fourth capital, physical capital: the power of the body to differentiate itself through embodied

practices, activities, and behaviors (Bourdieu, 1980, 1984; Frew & McGillivray, 2005; Shilling, 1991, 2003). Specifically, physical capital “refers to the *social formation* of bodies by individuals through sporting, leisure, and other activities in ways which express a class location and which are accorded symbolic value” (Shilling, 1991, p. 654, emphasis in original). Bourdieu believes that these capitals are important due to the way they correspond with social class position. Consequently he argues that social space is constituted of three dimensions, the first based on the volume of capital one possesses, the second relying on the relative weighting, or composition, of this capital, and the third is the way these properties change through time, or their trajectory (Bourdieu, 1984, 1987, 1989).

Sport and Social Class

Embodied behavior and corporeal representation define the relationship between sport and social class as “the body constitutes the corporeal core of all human action” and “bodily practices comprise the central features of engagement in physical activity” (Loy, 1991, p. 119). Sport, leisure, and activity participation, integral components of lifestyle, are dictated by the class-based relationship individuals have with their bodies, as well as the possession of economic, social, and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984). Accordingly, there is a relationship between sporting practices, corporeal engagement, and social position, and Bourdieu explains that it is important to consider these constructs together (Bourdieu, 1978, 1988). Class preferences for particular sports “receive their social significance” based on the perceived intrinsic and extrinsic benefits they will bring the participant in relation to their body (Bourdieu,

1984, p. 209). Bourdieu (1984) reveals that “a sport is more likely to be adopted by a social class if it does not contradict that class’s relation to the body at its deepest and most unconscious level” (p. 218). For instance, upper classes experience their lives in a culture of privilege, and demonstrate this through an effortless exhibition and a distinguishing conspicuous consumption of the material world around them. They pursue sports such as skiing, tennis, and golf, in exclusive private places with specific partners, characteristics which demonstrate a “highly controlled social exchange” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 217). The middle classes focus their lives around cultural promotion which is manifest through the status production of a socially driven, controlled, and presentable existence. They are concerned with cultivating their bodies, and demonstrate this through their preferences for sports like soccer, and physical fitness activities such as jogging, biking, and aerobics (Andrews, 1999; Andrews, Pitter, Zwick, & Ambrose, 1997; Bourdieu, 1984; Swanson 2003, 2009a, 2009b). Finally, the lower class exists in a culture of poverty that values instantaneous gratification and economic reward, and experiences an instrumental relation towards their bodies. This is evidenced in their predilection for certain physical activities, such as boxing, that are characterized by “a high investment of energy, effort or even pain,” and often, bodily contact (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 213).

Bourdieu’s understanding of the relationship between sport and social class indicates that participation in private sport communities, such as swimming clubs, can contribute to one’s social standing by positioning “the body-for-others,” distinguishing those maintaining a privileged lifestyle, and transferring valuable skills, characteristics,

and social connections to children for the purposes of class reproduction (1978, p. 838). Swimming is a middle to upper-middle class sporting pursuit as it requires one to possess economic, cultural, and social capital, and it has the unique quality of lacking an age-limit, accordingly demonstrating more prestige and exclusivity (Bourdieu, 1978, 1980). In addition, membership at a swim club can facilitate physical fitness and social profit, and maintains hidden entry requirements such as family tradition, early training, clothing, and techniques of sociability, all of which add to its distinctiveness (Bourdieu, 1978, 1984).

Family and the Transmission of Social Class Privilege

In many cases, sport participation is a salient feature of family life as values, skills, practices, and beliefs are transmitted in and through families. Bourdieu (1996) defines the family as “a set of related individuals linked either by alliance (marriage) or filiation, or, less commonly, by adoption (legal relationship), and living under the same roof (cohabitation)” (p.19). The families at Valley View adhere to the definition of the Standard North American Family (SNAF), a family structured with legal heterosexual marriage of a man and woman, in which the man is the main breadwinner, and the woman, while she may be in paid employment, is primarily responsible for maintaining the household and custodial care of children (Smith, 1993). Bourdieu (1996) believes this arbitrary, but nonetheless normal, naturalized concept of the traditional family has become “a privilege instituted into a universal norm” (p. 23), and offers those who possess it a social advantage, over and above their other social class indicators, as “family identity [is] one of the most powerful principles of perception of the social world

and one of the most real social units” (p. 25). He explains that the cohesive family unit is extraordinarily powerful and consequently responsible for both social and biological reproduction of the social order, social space, and social relations (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1996). Thus the family, as an advantaged institution, leads to the reproduction of both social class and embodied gender positions in and through children, and becomes the most important and prominent mechanism to facilitate the process by which class-based privilege is transmitted to future generations (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1996). Families “tend, unconsciously and consciously, to maintain or increase their assets and consequently to maintain or improve their position in the class structure” through their relative volume of capitals, possession of reconversion “instruments,” and power relations between themselves and other social classes (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 125). Bourdieu (1996) also explains that “one of the properties of dominant social fractions is that they have particularly extensive families ... that are strongly integrated because they are united not only by the affinity between *habitus* but also by the solidarity of interests” (p. 24, emphasis in original).

Parental social class is a formative force in children’s lives as it has “a powerful impact in shaping the daily rhythms of family life” (Lareau, 2003, p. 8). Many socially and culturally valuable embodied habits are the result of social class privilege as mothers, in particular, take responsibility for ensuring children’s successful acquisition of important, class-based skills and abilities (Bourdieu, 1984; Lareau, 2003). Lareau (2003) labels this process concerted cultivation, a childrearing practice favored by the middle class in order to help kids come to understand the institutional “rules of the

game” (p.6), better prepare them for a successful adulthood, and make sure they do not miss any opportunities that could benefit them in the future. This ideology revolves around parents who foster children’s talent, opinions, and skills; organize multiple activities into their schedules; use reason and directives and negotiation in verbal relations with the child; and intervene in child’s life and train him/her to take on an appropriate role (Lareau, 2003). Many families view their children as status symbols, demonstrative of social class position, and thus tend to cultivate their talents and abilities to ensure their future success and class location. Ultimately, through the family, there is an intergenerational transmission of social class privilege through children who learn their family and class habitus, receive particular forms and volumes of capitals, and develop a taste for particular goods and services (Bourdieu, 1984).

Research Design and Methodology

In order to assess these theoretical contentions, Bourdieu advocates the study of empirical contexts through the use of naturalistic methods such as ethnography and participant observation (Bourdieu, 1985a; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Wacquant, 1989). He believes that concepts “are designed to be *put to work empirically in systematic fashion*. Such notions as habitus, field, and capital can be defined, but only within the theoretical system they constitute, not in isolation” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 96, emphasis in original). Drawing on Bourdieu, this research relied on ethnographic methods in order to study the cultural field of Valley View, as defined by members embodied habitus and possession of relative capitals (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Wacquant, 1989). Ethnography is an emergent and promising research strategy in

the field of sport studies (Silk, 2005). The overall goal of ethnographic methods is to observe, understand, represent, and gain lived experience in the culture that is the focus of the research (Angrosino, 2005; Daly, 2007; Denzin, 1997; Saukko, 2003; Shaffir, 1999; Silk, 2005). Daly (2007, p. 86) explains that “in lived experience, culture is usually hidden from view but manifested in what we wear, how we speak, and what we believe,” and it is crucial “to move physically into the cultural spaces where people engage in their everyday activities.” Ethnography is a dynamic, emergent process that allows researchers to interact with participants in a social situation for an extended period of time in order to understand their way of life; engage in active participation with the community, developing rapport with subjects; and carefully document events and happenings to reflect the specific reality of the group being studied, events, phenomena, and experiences at a site (Creswell, 2003; Daly, 2007; Denzin, 2002; Hammersly & Atkinson, 1995; Tedlock, 2005).

The practice of ethnography is helpful as it offers the potential to articulate how the social, historical, and political contexts in which the phenomena of study is located are shaped by particular processes, forces, and power relations continually impacting the community (Denzin, 2002; Saukko, 2003). Accordingly, through an in-depth ethnographic investigation, this project seeks to “operate within a contextual PCS strategy” as it recognizes the way in which participation at Valley View is articulated to the broader social context of which it is a part (Andrews, 2008, p. 57). Denzin (1997) argues that researchers “who honor lived experience ground their work on the study of flesh-and-blood individuals” (p. 33). Thus this project attempts to describe the way in

which physically active, white, upper-middle class bodies are connected with the wider social structure, as meaning and significance are “*inscribed*” within bodies (Shilling, 2003, p. 118, emphasis in original). Ultimately, as mentioned, the goal of this research is to form a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between upper-middle class culture, family life, and swimming participation at Valley View through an analysis of the embodied practices, performances, and expressions of privilege facilitating the reproduction of familial social class privilege. Therefore I have engaged ethnographic methods to discover the empirical details of members’ embodied lived experiences through an in-depth analysis of their whole way of life and the meaning in their lives (Williams, 1961). Below I will detail my ethnographic methodology including my site, sample, data collection, and analysis (for a more complete and descriptive methodological summary, consult appendix B).

Data Collection, Site, and Sample

This research was conducted at the Valley View Swim and Tennis Club, a semi-private facility located in a suburban area approximately 12 miles northwest of a major mid-Atlantic city. Valley View averages about 200 members each summer, the majority of which are families with two-parent households and children under the age of 18. The summer of 2009 saw slightly lower numbers with a total of 167 memberships as of July, 110 of which were families, 14 family plus nanny, 23 couple, and 20 single memberships. The 43 non-family memberships were mostly older couples or single elderly people who used the pool primarily to swim laps. In terms of cost, a 2009 summer family membership was \$670 with options to pay more for voting rights, and

these fees effectively allow each member to own a fraction of the club facilities. The club has three tennis courts; one basketball court; ping pong tables; a pavilion area for picnics, grilling, and shade; and a 25-meter, six-lane pool with a depth ranging from three-and-a-half to five-and-a-half feet deep, and two 12-meter by 12-meter areas attached at opposite ends on opposite sides to form an “S”—one of which is a one to three foot shallow area with stairs, and the other is a 13-foot deep diving area with two one-meter diving boards. There is ample deck space, grassy areas for chairs, and a manned lifeguard office to field questions, greet and admit members, and handle emergencies. The pool itself is managed by an outside management company that is responsible for pool repairs and lifeguard staff. The tennis courts are maintained by the members, and the Valley View executive board takes care of larger maintenance and building projects at the club.

Valley View has a swim team and a dive team, both of which compete in the County swim and dive leagues respectively, are restricted by the league to allow members only, and charge \$125 per child per team to participate for the season. Team members vary from summer to summer, but generally there are approximately 50 divers and 75 swimmers each season. Both teams are parent run with an “A” team representative and a “B” team representative, as well as other parents to facilitate the hosting of weekly swim meets. Each team has a paid head and assistant coach, and unpaid helpers who compete in the 15-18 year old age group. During June and July, both teams hold two practices during the day, one in the morning before the pool opens, and one in the late afternoon while the pool is open to other members. The club

also has a tennis pro who runs a tennis day camp and private lessons on the courts. While there are competitive opportunities for children at Valley View, members who participated in this research largely reported their club membership to function primarily as a form of family leisure time and socialization, with the sport component a distant second. Interestingly, the suburban community where Valley View is located is unique in terms of its flourishing swimming infrastructure. Not only does the area feature the number one and two ranked USA swimming age group club teams in the country, but it also has one of the largest, most developed summer swim leagues in the United States, and thus attracts families to one of some 90 swim clubs in the county (Beekman, 2009; Slear, 2007). Within two miles of Valley View alone, there are four other swim clubs which are almost identical in terms of fees, club layout, and membership demographic.

Gaining access to Valley View was not a challenge in this research as I have been employed as the Valley View head swim coach since April 2006. In addition to coaching, I have taught private swimming lessons to approximately 75 different families over the past four summers. Given my position, I have roughly 2800 hours of lived experience over four years with this community, all of which is documented through a series of field notes. To corroborate the data documented in my field notes, make my interpretations more credible, and accentuate my understanding of the lives of Valley View families, I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with mothers and children who frequent the pool. My goal in the interviewing process was to achieve dialogue through open conversations with participants (Stroh, 2000b). Interviews focused on families

fitting the following characteristics: married parents of more than one child; one child in the family must be between six and 10 years old; and this child must actively participate in the swim team, dive team, or private swim lessons during the summer. These criteria were developed in an effort to obtain perspectives from Valley View families who frequent the pool often, and have children young enough that they still rely on parental control and their parents are still actively involved in their lives, but are also old enough to have ideas, opinions, interests, and activities of their own (cf. Lareau, 2003). In total, 35 interviews (20 mothers and 15 children) were conducted during the summer of 2009 (for all interview protocols consult appendix D). Each of the 20 women signed an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved consent form, and participated in a recorded, in-depth, semi-structured interview at their own home which lasted anywhere between 45 and 105 minutes. Initially I had wanted to interview children from all 20 families, however schedules did not permit, and I was only able to conduct 15 child interviews, each of which was informal, semi-structured, and 10 to 30 minutes in length. Overall, the interviews helped me to assess the motivations for spending the summer at the pool, participating in the swim team and other pool-oriented activities, and the way in which parents (namely mothers) invoke their social class privilege on behalf of their children.

Given the focus on social class status, establishing a demographic profile for the participating families was imperative to this research. The town where Valley View is located is home to many government employees, lawyers, and professional business persons and reports a median household income of \$157,254 per year (U.S. Census

Bureau, 2006-2008). Participants in this research were asked complete anonymous demographic surveys in which they designated, among other characteristics, annual household income. They had a choice of six options derived from the 2007 Current Population Survey quintiles for the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Of the 20 women surveyed, one selected her annual household income to be between \$100,000 and \$135,000; three checked theirs between \$135,000 and \$177,000; and the remaining 16 noted their income to be more than \$177,000 annually. These results place all participants in the top 20% of families in the U.S., and 16, or 80% of families, in the top 5% of all American households. In addition to their financial standing, the Valley View mothers also volunteered demographic information related to their ethnicity, occupation, age, children, and level of education. Sixteen of the 20 women identified as White, while the remaining four, 20%, selected Asian. In terms of occupation, 35% (seven) of mothers stay home full-time, while the remaining two-thirds (65%) work as part-time professionals in fields such as law, accounting, and administration. The average age of participants was 40 years old, and 11 families had only two children, eight families had three children, and one family had four children. Lastly, this was a highly educated group of women with 75% of them possessing a post-graduate degree and 100% earning a college degree. Similarly, they reported 85% of their husbands had a post-graduate degree and 100% of them held a college degree. Based on the aforementioned information and for the purposes of this project, I have classified Valley View's membership base as upper-middle class, and the terms upper-middle class,

upper-income, and dominant class are used interchangeably throughout this dissertation (for all demographic characteristics collected, consult appendix C).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

All field notes had been taken by August 31, 2009, and all 35 interviews were completed between May 26, 2009 and September 2, 2009. I transcribed all interviews myself, a process which I completed by the end of September 2009. While this was time consuming, it did allow me to gain detailed knowledge of each interview, which in turn helped me adjust my own interview style with each successive interview, as well as increase my familiarity with the participants and interview content. All totaled, between interview transcripts, field notes, and supporting documents, I ended up with approximately 700 single-spaced pages of computerized data.

Once transcribed, all computerized data collected at Valley View was uploaded into Atlas.ti, a qualitative coding software program designed to assist with data management as well as the interpretation and analysis processes. I recognize that a tension exists in PCS regarding the value of using qualitative software to assist with data, however I strongly believe in the advantages it offers. Qualitative computer software can be an excellent tool when it comes to transforming data as it benefits “the researcher in terms of speed, consistency, rigor, and access to analytic methods not available by hand” (for instance recoding and editing) (Weitzman, 1999, p. 1241; see also Wolcott, 1994). Further, “these programs represent a quantum leap forward from the old scissors-and-paper approach: they’re more systematic, more thorough, less likely to miss things, more flexible, and much, much faster” (Weitzman, 1999, p. 1247-

1248). Using qualitative software for data analysis can be worrisome to researchers who fear they will become distanced from their data, but I found, as Weitzman (1999) insists, that Atlas.ti was able to “help [me] get even closer to the data than [I could] with paper transcripts” (p.1259) since all files were on the screen in an instant, the full context was available to me, and there were multiple data-viewing options. While computers certainly allow for a different relationship with the data than do manual approaches, according to Stroh (2000a), this starts with the decision to transcribe interviews and/or take field notes using a computer, which I had been doing since the beginning of my field work in 2006. It is important to recognize that computers do not actually do the work of analyzing the data, rather the control remains in the hands of the researcher who still must understand methodological implications and considerations inherent in the research process (Stroh, 2000a; Weitzman, 1999). Atlas.ti was extremely useful in structuring this volume of data as I could see and explore all of my documents at the same time, continuously play with various groupings of different ideas, retrieve important quotes and phrases quickly, search through all text with more ease, and constantly relate between the data itself, my theoretical understanding, and relevant literature.

Through Atlas.ti I was able to identify and develop themes and concepts by reflecting and analyzing the data collected in the field (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1997). Coding through computer software can assist researchers in breaking their data down into “manageable chunks” which can be sorted and categorized to build a theoretical framework and interpret the data (Stroh, 2000b, p. 210; see also LaRossa, 2005a). This

method relies upon language as the connections between words and theories, and the empirical and conceptual, and drives the development of central themes, concepts, and theories created from the data (LaRossa, 2005a). Coding occurs in three phases: open, axial, and selective (Creswell, 2003; Daly, 2007; LaRossa, 2005a; Van den Hoonaard, 1997). I used these three phases to organize and help me think “theoretically about textual materials” (including interview transcripts and field notes), rather than specifically to build grounded theory as coding procedures are often used to develop (LaRossa, 2005a, p. 838; see also Creswell, 2003; Daly, 2007). Open coding involves the identification, categorization, and organization of key concepts by breaking down the data. Axial coding builds the data back up by making connections and interrelations between and among categories. Finally, selective coding seeks to identify a central theme or an overarching, linking concept that explains phenomena at the research site. Through this coding procedure, I was able to identify phenomena in my data and gain a better understanding of Valley View and my participants in order to answer my research questions.

Data Quality

With the development of these themes present at Valley View, however, there are some important challenges to the identification of a central story that is representative of participants’ experience (Daly, 2007). In qualitative research there is no single correct interpretation, and there will always be differing, and equally valid, inferences drawn from any research site, and therefore the goal is not to find an absolute truth, rather it is to understand the reality of the culture at hand (Flaherty,

2002; Maxwell, 2002). Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) advocate the process of crystallization which acknowledges that there is no one reality, and there can be “deepened, complex, and thoroughly partial understandings” (p. 963) of any research site as there is more than one way to approach inquiry. Thus qualitative validity means representing the reality of the culture that we are studying accurately and to the best of our ability (Daly, 2007). In order to produce quality data, analysis, and interpretations, investigations should focus on the “factual accuracy” of the culture, participants, and site (Maxwell, 2002, p. 45).

While I believe it is important to acknowledge the idea of crystallization as it relates to this project, I also feel it is necessary to take traditional steps to ensure validity, and consequently a credible, academic project. These can include triangulation, saturation, member checks, thick description, reflexivity, presenting counter information, peer debriefing, collaboration with participants, and external auditing (Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Miller, 2000). To achieve validity in this research I engaged in six of these nine methods. First, I approached my inquiry through triangulation as I used multiple-methods including interviews, observations, and participant observations to understand the culture of Valley View (Creswell, 2003; Daly, 2007). Second, I achieved saturation at Valley View through a prolonged engagement and an ongoing relationship with the members of the pool (Creswell, 2003). Upon the conclusion of my research, I had spent approximately 2800 hours at Valley View working closely with the participants, getting to know them well, and establishing rapport with them. Creswell and Miller (2000) argue that spending a long time in the field “solidifies evidence

because researchers can check out the data and their hunches and compare interview data with observational data” (p. 128). Accordingly, I also conducted 35 interviews with mothers and children at the pool to corroborate my interpretations and increase my understanding of the lives of Valley View families. “Credible data” results from “collaboration with participants,” an additional way to establish validity (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 128). Further, I have maintained my involvement with pool members since I finished collecting data. These continued relationships can increase the quality of the findings as well. Next, I used member-checking to “determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings” (Creswell, 2003, p. 196), a process involving returning to participants to “confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). To practically conduct member checks, I emailed all 20 mothers an 11-page, single-spaced document that contained one excerpt from each of the four empirical chapters in this dissertation. While there was only a 30% response rate, all comments indicated that the “overall account [was] realistic and accurate” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). Further, I engaged in peer-debriefing with “Qualis,” a qualitative workshop group which met twice a month to tackle methodological issues in our ongoing, different, yet related, projects. For me these peer-review meetings helped me to continually develop my ideas, have a forum to critically discuss my research, and enhance my account of Valley View, ensuring that it “will resonate with people other than the researcher” (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). And finally, I did my best to be reflexive throughout the research process and tried to avoid any biased thinking or behavior that

would threaten the validity of my research data, interpretation, analysis, or writing (Becker, 1967; Daly, 2007).

Reflexivity. Ethnographers study culture through naturalistic methods, and their intention regarding making sense of the social world demands that they “acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences” (Creswell, 2003, p. 8-9; see also Daly, 2007). Accordingly, I consider reflexivity particularly vital to this project due to the nature of my relationships with the Valley View members and my role at the pool. Reflexivity in ethnographic work relies on identity management and the researcher’s acknowledgement that all information is always mediated through the self (Daly, 2007). Any representation is only partial, and is based on the “limitations of the researcher’s perspective” (Boyd, 2008, p. 216; see also Denzin, 1997). It has been important for me to reflect on how my understanding of the Valley View families lived reality is anchored in my own subjectivities and experiences, and specifically, interrogated through the eyes of my researcher self, my brought self, and my situationally created self.

My researcher self has been shaped through years of qualitative, sociological and cultural studies training designed to help me produce noteworthy and novel scholarship, furthering the PCS discipline. Therefore, my investment in Valley View as a research site has been supported by my background in literature and theory which have helped me to understand some of the processes, experiences, and phenomena I have witnessed, observed, and been a part of at the pool. Additionally, my researcher self

has been focused on the successful completion of this project, and thus has separate personal motivations impacting the process.

My brought self is white, married, middle class, and female, and a former division I swimmer and coach. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) argue that it is important to take into consideration different perspectives of social realities that are based on our own “gender, sensibilities, biographies, spiritual and emotional longings” as they shape the research process (p. 963; see also Daly, 2007). Through this project I realized that I “can only understand the Other through reflecting on its similarity to and difference from, the Self” (Saukko, 2003, p. 56). Accordingly, it is important to disclose that through my brought self I recognize the cyclical operation of capital in my own life, and the way in which it contributed to my development and acquisition of physical capital in swimming, a set of skills that have garnered me many important and life-changing opportunities. My brought self also understands the families and relationships at the pool from personal experience, knows what it feels like to be on a swim team, can see great benefits to membership in this community, and hopes one day to offer a summer swimming experience to her own children.

Thirdly, my situationally created self was the hardest to reconcile as I balanced performing my job as the swim coach and swim lesson instructor, while simultaneously conducting research. I empathized and sympathized with members, got to know parents and children, coached the team with a vested interest in their individual development and success, as well as our record and group performance, and gave swim lessons and coached knowing that I was being paid for how well I performed my job. As

an example of my multiple, inseparable selves at the pool, the following is a portion of the text of the email Tracy² wrote me after our interview:

I enjoyed our interview today - it made me think about all the reasons why I love Valley View and how important it is to our family's summer. So thank you for bringing out all those good feelings and reinforcing our decision to spend so much time at the pool.

While I very much appreciated that Tracy enjoyed our interview and took the time to write me an email, I could not help but consider my role as both coach and researcher and the implications of this duality. Tracy insinuated that I helped to “reinforce” her familial membership, thus indicating that I am a constitutive element of the Valley View Swim and Tennis Club. Assuming my analysis and interpretation discussed in this dissertation are credible, then it is clear through Tracy’s sentiments that my role at the pool helps to reproduce the white, upper-middle class social privilege I have detailed in the chapters that follow. Accordingly, it was important for me to continually reflect on my role at the pool, and how the presence of these three different, inseparable selves impacted the research process (Creswell, 2003).

Saukko (2003) explains that the “counterpart to being true to Other realities in new ethnography is to be critically aware of the way in which one’s Self and its commitments shape the research” (Saukko, 2003, p. 62). Throughout this project I tried to be cognizant of my previous experiences, relationships to participants, and insider/outsider status within the community as the researcher is never just a neutral observer (Denzin, 1997; Hammersly & Atkinson, 1995). At Valley View, I am neither a true insider nor a true outsider, and thus both my presence and identity at the pool are

² All participants’ names have been changed to protect their anonymity.

unique. On the one hand, I feel like I am always an insider at the club because the participants know me, and I know them, their culture and context, and have insider relationships in the community. This status gave me much more access to situations that I normally would not be privy to, something Fine (1987) believes is necessary for this type of research to be good. Yet the field worker is always an outsider, even when they are “an attached or instrumental member” in the community (Shaffir, 1999, p. 683), and/or conducting unobtrusive observation (Angrosino, 2005). I have been an employee who works for the members of the pool. I might have authority with the children, swimming knowledge over the parents, and be treated as an important person at Valley View, but any way I look at it, I am not a member, rather, I am employed by the pool and its members which makes me an outsider. Due to this positioning, I have worked hard to be reflexive throughout my research in order to ensure the integrity of this project.

Summary and Chapter Outline

In summary, through ethnographic methods and an understanding of the relationship between the physically active swimming body, family life, and social class at the Valley View Swim and Tennis Club, this project has investigated how the private pool environment functions as a physical space for the embodied performance, expression, and subsequent reproduction of social class privilege. Specifically, following Bourdieu, this research argues that participation at Valley View is illustrative of white, upper-middle class privilege, and membership operates as a distinctive consumption choice illustrating familial capital, social class status, and contributing to the reproduction of

future generations that will embody the same familial social class position. Each of the following four chapters engages particular theoretical ideas with corresponding empirical evidence. This set-up purposefully artificially thematizes each chapter in an effort to make it a coherent, stand-alone piece, rather than contingent on the other three. While I believe this worked out well, I issue this caveat to readers as each of the four chapters may contain slightly redundant empirical and/or theoretical content. Additionally, though each chapter can stand on its own, I have worked to maintain four themes discussed to differing degrees across all four chapters. First, each chapter aims to spell out the empirical dimensions comprising these 20 families lived experience of privilege, and thus the characteristics and dispositions emblematic of their upper-middle class (family) habitus. Secondly, through their relative social position, the families in this research exhibit greater power and control over their own lives, a theme that is subtly referenced throughout each chapter. Third, all chapters engage, at varying levels, the way in which Valley View represents a taken for granted, naturalized component of member's lives, and therefore operates as a vehicle of class and race-based social segregation, anchored in their desires to maintain and conserve their class status. And lastly, each chapter references how the pool represents a physical space, or cultural field, in which parents work to transmit and convert their capital in and through the status project that is their children, in order to ensure that their privilege is reproduced in the next generation. Engaging these four themes, the following briefly outlines the four empirically-based chapters included in this dissertation.

Chapter I, *The Reproduction of Happy, Healthy Kids*, describes how mothers have engineered the cultural field of Valley View into their children's lives in an effort to maintain, promote, and reproduce their healthy lifestyles. Specifically, parents work to transmit their relative levels of economic, cultural, and social capital in and through their children's pool participation, in order to facilitate the conversion and subsequent acquisition of lifelong physical capital. The women interviewed provide details on the way Valley View helps their children gain physical, medical, and mental benefits integral to the reproduction of happy, healthy kids, and crucial to the maintenance of their healthy, physically active lifestyle, emblematic of their upper-middle class status.

Chapter II, *The Upper-Middle Class Family Habitus and the Reproduction of "Good People,"* examines the way in which Valley View membership contributes to the construction of a family habitus. This chapter identifies the empirical characteristics underlying the upper-middle class family habitus, and the way in which participation at the pool is rooted family tradition and the desire to spend family time together. Ultimately this chapter argues that pool membership operates as a strategic opportunity to demonstrate, convert, and transmit varied levels of economic, cultural, and social capitals in and through children, in order to engender them with embodied dispositions emblematic of their social class position.

Chapter III, *Cultivating Cultural Capital: The Enriching Experiences Shaping Upper-Middle Class Childhood*, focuses on how the mothers exhibit distinguishing upper-middle class childrearing ideologies designed to produce "well-balanced" individuals. This chapter discovers how Valley View membership has become a very

important component of the mothers' organization of family life as it offers an upper-middle class, white, safe, controlled cultural field yielding many intangible benefits and enriching experiences for children. Specifically, the mothers employ Valley View in their children's lives as a distinctive physical space to engage in unstructured play, experience a controlled freedom, and help build their self-confidence.

Chapter IV, *Upper-Middle Class, White, and Privileged: Detailing the Lived Experience of the Valley View Mothers*, explores the daily and family lives of the Valley View mothers interviewed in this research. In particular, this chapter discusses these women's upper-middle class habitus, which includes their family labor, leisure, and domestic lives, as well as explains the way in which the Valley View pool fits into their summer lifestyles, offering them a sense of belonging, a distinctive atmosphere, and an opportunity to experience relaxation. This chapter also acknowledges the way in which these women's lives have been shaped by the intersections between class, race, and gender, three constructs which have contributed to their social status position as upper-middle class, white, privileged women.

Chapter I: The Reproduction of Happy, Healthy Kids

Participation in private sport communities, such as swimming clubs, can contribute to one's social standing by positioning "the body-for-others," distinguishing those maintaining a privileged lifestyle, and transferring valuable skills, characteristics, and social connections to children for the purposes of class reproduction (Bourdieu, 1978, p. 838). Invoking Bourdieu (1984), I argue that swimming participation at Valley View represents dominant tastes as it occurs in a private, restricted place, with specific members, and requires a "high investment," coupled with a "freely determined" level of "physical exertion" (p. 217). Largely pre-determined by class-based resources, sports pursued at private clubs often require various pre-existing levels of capital in order to join and participate (Shilling, 1991). For example, club swimming participation is illustrative of economic capital in the form of a costly membership and associated pool gear (i.e.: swim suits, sunscreen, toys, etc.); cultural capital demonstrated through family tradition, early training, and tastes and preferences for membership choice; social capital by way of social network and connections formed at the pool; and physical capital demonstrated through bodies, swim skills, and dispositions (Bourdieu, 1978, 1984; Shilling, 1991). Thus, swimming at Valley View is a luxury afforded through the possession of capital, and participation tends to yield greater levels of these prestigious, class-based capitals (Bourdieu, 1984).

Bourdieu (1984) explains that sport participation is dictated by economic, social, and cultural capital, as well as a class-based relationship individuals have with their

bodies at “the deepest and most unconscious level” (p. 218). Further, embodied behavior and corporeal representation define the relationship between sport and social class as the body is the central component in physical activity (Loy, 1991). Accordingly, Bourdieu (1978) argues:

The logic whereby agents incline towards this or that sporting practice cannot be understood unless their dispositions toward sport, which are themselves one dimension of a *particular relation to the body*, are reinserted into the unity of a system of dispositions, the *habitus*, which is the basis from which life-styles are generated. (p. 833, emphasis in original)

Physical activity is appropriated by individuals based on “the intrinsic and extrinsic profits of each sport in terms of the dispositions of the habitus, and more precisely, in terms of the relation to the body” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 212). This connection individuals experience with their body, or “body schema,” defines their habitus, or “the depository of a whole world view and a whole philosophy of the person and the body” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 218). Above all else, this relationship “distinguishes the working classes from the privileged classes” (Bourdieu, 1978, p. 838). One’s association with their body determines their system of tastes and preferences, is illustrative of social class position, and is a vehicle through which the lived experience of privilege is represented (Bourdieu, 1988).

This corporeal power, endowed in and through the body, is signaled through a distinctive level of physical capital, the production of which “refers to the *social formation* of bodies by individuals through sporting, leisure, and other activities in ways which express a class location and which are accorded symbolic value” (Shilling, 1991, p. 654). Not only does physical capital signify social class position, but it also offers

individuals distinctive opportunities to convert it into other forms of capital (Shilling, 1991; Wright & Burrows, 2006). The acquisition of “physical capital is a relatively ‘hidden’ form of privilege transmission,” and therefore often times members of the upper-classes spend time and money for their children to participate in elite physical cultural activities which help cultivate various forms of capital (Shilling, 1991, p. 657; see also Dagkas & Stathi, 2007). Capital is embodied in and transmitted through the family, and thus the family “is one of the key sites of the accumulation of capital in its different forms and its transmission between the generations ... is the main ‘subject’ of reproduction strategies” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 23). Capital only exists in relation to the particular cultural fields in which it exerts power and influence (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In a field, capital can be converted with the goal of strategically ensuring class reproduction, thereby preserving social position (Bourdieu, 1986). Accordingly, the cultural field of Valley View offers a distinctive physical space for parents to engender important, embodied capitals in their children so as to “maintain or improve their position in the class structure,” and thus, reproduce their social privilege in the next generation (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 125).

In this chapter I argue that the families who took part in this research have engineered the cultural field of Valley View in their lives as a physical space to transmit and convert their important forms and volumes of capitals in and through their children, with the strategic goal of maintaining, promoting, and reproducing both their healthy lifestyles and social class privilege in the next generation. Accordingly, the following discusses the mothers’ belief in the pool as a “good active space” for their children to

acquire the tools to live a healthy, physically active lifestyle expressive of their upper-middle class status. As such, parents, mainly mothers, place a large emphasis on their familial pool membership so that their children can not only augment their volumes of economic and social capital, but also develop their sense of cultural capital, and gain lifelong physical capital. Specifically, the women detail the physical, medical, and mental-oriented benefits their children derive from Valley View participation, and make a concerted attempt to integrate the pool into their children's lives for these reasons. Through Valley View membership, parents garner a distinct opportunity to facilitate their number one childrearing goal: to reproduce happy, healthy children.

Healthy Lifestyles and the Importance of Pool Participation

Through the eyes of the Valley View mothers, it is clear that the pool operates as an important component of their healthy lifestyles. In our interviews, all of the mothers expressed a desire to emphasize to their children, as Faith put it, "being active, staying fit, and being healthy," and without exception, they all believe that Valley View encourages these ideals. Universally the women told me, like Kristen explained, Valley View membership "provides [my kids] with a very healthy lifestyle in the summer." Barb, and others, referred to attending Valley View as "a healthy family activity," and said that her goal is to have her kids "have a great sense of let's go to the pool, Mom, why aren't we at the pool already today, and that to me will build into a healthy lifestyle." The women felt strongly that the pool is a great place for their children to engage in physical activity, and like Kelly asserted, going to the pool frequently "is teaching [my kids] a lifestyle of being active." Many daily lifestyle practices, such as the

Valley View families' ritual trips to the pool, are related to health outcomes and designed to promote longevity and quality of life (Cockerham, 2005). Yet frequenting the pool, a lifestyle practice illustrative of these families' upper-middle class habitus (reference chapter two for a detailed discussion of the upper-middle class family habitus), is a taken for granted, routine behavior afforded to those with greater levels of privilege (Bourdieu, 1984; Cockerham, 2005; Korp, 2008). Korp (2008) argues that a "'healthy lifestyle' is, thus, always a representation of the lifestyle of a specific group in society, constructed and expressed as a means of social distinction in specific fields of power" (p. 24). Healthy lifestyles are defined by powerful and dominant groups, and permeate cultural fields with the implication that living in a healthful way is a marker of both moral worth and social class position (Abel, 2008; Bourdieu, 1984; Cockerham, 2005; Korp, 2008). Therefore social class location has a "powerful influence on lifestyle forms" (Cockerham, 2005, p. 56), and members of the dominant classes use their relative levels of power and control in order to establish and maintain healthier lifestyle practices (Korp, 2008).

Lifestyles are, thus, symbolic gestures, and power relations are an integral part of the social valuation of different lifestyles. From such a perspective, a lifestyle symbolises the resources connected to the social position of the person practising the lifestyle, but also the relative power of that social position. Lifestyles, therefore, both symbolise resources such as money, time, specific knowledge and skills, and the social positions that tend to be most affluent with the resources a specific lifestyle demands. (Korp, 2008, p. 19)

Accordingly, the possession of resources, or capital, has a great impact on the ability to live a healthy lifestyle, and is "closely linked to health and health-promoting behavior" (Abel, 2008, p. 2). For example, economic capital allows people the freedom to pay for

a variety of medical services, afford to live in a particular neighborhood, belong to a health club, and much more (Abel, 2008). Cultural capital has wide ranging effects on the development of healthy lifestyles and behaviors, and encompasses everything from educational knowledge to the use of cultural resources and skills to improve well-being (Abel, 2008; Korp, 2008; Williams, 1995). The demonstration of a “‘healthy’ attitude and a healthy looking body is a form of cultural capital of increasing importance ... for all social groups, in all social fields” (Korp, 2008, p. 24). Cultural capital can also lead people to find social networks that provide support for health problems or issues (Abel, 2008), and further, social capital can help direct people to health promoting venues such as parks and health clubs, or even lifesaving medical professionals. Ultimately, the formation and maintenance of a healthy lifestyle speaks to hegemonic power, as only those with more control and resources have the capacity to achieve it (Korp, 2008). Thus, for privileged groups, particularly those who fall into the SNAF classification, healthy living and the reproduction of health related lifestyle practices, become a seamless, taken for granted element of their habitus, and the product of this lived experience, the healthy upper-middle class body, is a sign indicating distinction and social status (Bourdieu, 1984; Cockerham, 2005; Denton & Walters, 1999; Korp, 2008). The health-oriented habitus, which the dominant classes subscribe to, is a powerful influence in the formation of healthy bodies through exercise, leisure activities, and food consumption (Williams, 1995).

The Valley View Trifecta: “The Physical, Medical, and Mental”

The Valley View mothers view the cultivation of a healthy lifestyle as a multi-dimensional, status-oriented childrearing project, and believe the benefits of pool participation revolve around, as Lynn said, the “wonderful connection” that exists between “the physical, medical, and mental aspect” of both swimming and membership at the pool. Heather believed “there are lots of good things—it’s good mentally, and it’s great physically, and it’s good emotionally.” And Sarah revealed, “I think in terms of the physical benefits it’s terrific, I think in terms of the spiritual benefits it’s also terrific,” indicating, quite clearly, that the pool serves multiple purposes. This connection between body and mind was important to the mothers, and signaled that the pool is more than just a generic space for physical activity. Rather, it is a place to cultivate the upper-middle class swimming body, as well as gain numerous intangible benefits accrued from membership.

“The Physical”: Building the Upper-Middle Class Swimming Body

The mothers believe very strongly that the pool is, as Lila remarked, “great exercise for the kids.” Cathy mentioned one of her reasons for joining the pool was that it had “an element of exercise for the kids for the summer.” The mothers also like the fact that swimming works out one’s whole body, not just certain parts. Margaret explained that it is an “exercise from head to toe,” Sarah said “swimming involves getting your whole self going,” and Tracy believed swimming to be “such a good overall body exercise.” Barb felt that swimming is “a healthy activity,” and “better than any other exercise,” and Stephanie said, “I feel it’s good for them, physically, the swimming,

so that's also nice that they are getting the exercise." The mothers believe that the exercise component of the pool is important as they place a large emphasis on physical activity in their children's lives. Further, they like the idea that swimming is a full-body workout which cultivates their children's class-appropriate swimming bodies. Along the same lines, the women praised the pool as being, in Faith's words, "a good active space" for their children. Faith told me that "it's really important for [the kids] to be active and exercising and so that's why I certainly think the pool is a wonderful place to go." She feels that swimming is "essential" for fitness, and she likes going because her children "are playing in the pool [and] they're getting good exercise the whole time." Lynn told me, "I think that there's no question that they are getting exercise every day even without [swim] team, [which] is honestly like an hour extra of intense exercise ... because it's non-stop, with or without the team, moving in and out, and jumping." Similarly, Sarah mentioned, "I love that they are physically active at the pool, and even if they're just free swimming at the pool, it's still better than almost anything else." And Tracy explained the same idea that "being physically healthy is important, and I think they're getting that at the pool, even if they're playing, they're still swimming, they're diving off the wall with their friends, or you know chasing each other in the water—it's physical activity." Overall, the mothers believe in the distinct physical activity time their Valley View membership offers their children, and accordingly, the corresponding impact it has on the development of their healthy bodies.

The Valley View families' draw on their class-based power in order to secure entry to the pool, an environment in which parents, namely mothers, have the distinct

opportunity to not only shape their health-oriented lifestyles in positive and important ways, but also work to cultivate their children's class-based swimming bodies. Upper-middle class sporting pursuits, such as swimming, are free from violence, physical contact, and inappropriate verbal or physical gestures, characteristics defining them as corporeally appropriate for the dominant classes (Bourdieu, 1984). Like Andrews (1999) argues of soccer and the middle class, youth swimming participation "encourages the right type of corporeal aesthetic" (p. 48) for the upper-middle class. The swimming body is a tool built through repetition, skill acquisition, and practice, as individuals must work hard to produce appropriate bodily movements (Reinhart, 1998). As a physical activity, it offers participants a distinctive opportunity to gain cardio-vascular and muscular fitness, "health-maintaining functions" believed to contribute internally to better health and longevity, and externally to improve physique (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 212). Further, swimming, as both a sport and recreational practice, tends to be popular among white, upper-middle class families, and reinforces regimes of class and race-based exclusivity, and consequently social segregation (Dukes & Coakley, 2002; Irwin et al., 2009; Hastings et al., 2006). Based on these dimensions, the swimming body is often cultivated at a young age, white and upper-middle class, and emblematic of both healthy lifestyle choices and social status through corporeal representation. In addition, this class-appropriate physique is created through swimming's effect on the body, that is on weight maintenance, body image, injury prevention, lifelong physical activity benefits, and diet.

Weight maintenance and body image. Dominant classes view “the body [as] an end in itself,” and therefore understand the symbiotic relationship between particular physically active pursuits and health (Giulianotti, 2005, p. 163). Physical activity participation is associated with health, weight, and corporeal confidence (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). The Valley View mothers believe that having their children involved in swimming is important because, as Lynn said, “it’s great for their bodies.” Sabrina felt that “your sense of wellness is enhanced by, you know, the act of movement of their body.” Lila also explained there was “something about moving your body” that was good for her children. The mothers spoke about the connection between swimming and appearance. For instance, Margaret believed that swimming would elongate her daughter’s muscles:

I like the way the muscles of the swimmers look, I think it elongates, and it does a lot to a lot of the muscles ... at the same time [it] work outs everything in an okay way. I don’t know much—in layman’s terms, swimming looks like an exercise that elongates, doesn’t just bulk up [and] generally all your muscles are worked out.

Heather discussed appearance in a different way. She said to me:

I mean I think it’s really good for their bodies. You know what’s great about swimming—I mean how cool is this? I have three girls who are not embarrassed to walk around in their bathing suits. Right? I mean how many other girls are in middle school or high school who hide, or wouldn’t be caught dead in a bathing suit? Or worry, I’m going to the beach, and worried about this, that, and the other thing. Yeah, think about it, they just throw on a suit and go out, that is so great, you know?! I mean in this day in age, when you’re looking at magazines where everybody has to have a perfect body, who cares! I love that.

Heather spoke to her daughters developing a sense of self-esteem about their bodies.

She believed that the pool was helping them grow up to be confident about the way they looked, even in an era where intense messages about having the perfect body are

pervasive. Lynn made a similar comment to me recounting her seven-year old son's behavior:

Evan is conscious of—he thinks he looks good and he'll say that because of swimming. And you know people will say like, 'look at that swimmer body, you know your shoulders are getting so broad,' and he equates that to they're saying 'I look good.' So sometimes he will walk around the house saying you know, 'I've got a swimmer's body,' so he's feeling good about what he's doing and how he looks.

Lynn's discussion of how her son Evan views his body in relation to swimming is important as they both believe that swimming has changed his body for the better.

Lynn noted that she didn't want him to become overly body conscious, but appreciated what his shape did for his confidence. When I spoke with Evan, he told me that swimming "makes your body look strong." Similarly, Cathy explained how her son's body changes over the summer:

Physically, I think it's incredibly important. I look at their bodies, their bodies change every summer, Michael's in particular. He trims down when he swims, and I fight my weight all the time so I don't want them to have to do that ... But it—also for boys who are not always as coordinated, it really can develop them with all the different strokes, and show them all different kinds of abilities and what you can use your body [for] and I think it makes you much more aware of your body than a lot of other sports, or at least more parts of your body. ... And while I don't want them ever to be caught up in their physical appearance to too great of a point, I do want them to be healthy, and I do want them to be trim, and this really has taught them [that].

Cathy comments on the fact that her sons lack coordination and swimming is the perfect outlet for their aptitude, and indicates that weight management, body image, and corporeal awareness and control are important. The body, as a social product, can communicate particular understandings simply through physique, and thus being healthy, or displaying physical capital, can earn those who possess it valuable social and

cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984, 1988; Shilling, 1991). The most insignificant details of corporeal representation can demonstrate how one treats their body, and further, operate as powerful, class-based signals to others (Bourdieu, 1977).

Along these same lines, many mothers emphasized the idea of weight at the pool. For example, Heather said, “there are very few overweight people at the pool, I mean Valley View does not have really fat people, I don’t know what it’s like at other pools, but we don’t have any really heavy parents or little kids for that matter.” And Nancy said, “nobody wants to be super fat in a bathing suit, let’s face [it], it’s true, it’s true. You know people—if you see everybody in Valley View, most of the people are healthy, you know, everybody’s fit.” Interestingly, Nancy uses the term “healthy” to describe other members’ maintenance of an appropriate weight. Throughout all of the interviews, many of the mothers used the term “healthy” as a way to portray aspects of their children’s bodies, and therefore I argue that it is important for the mothers to have their kids exuding physical capital, or both appearing and being healthy. I believe this effort is characteristic of their upper-middle class habitus.

The way in which an individual controls and presents their corporeal appearance is a marker of their moral worth as the body is “the only tangible manifestation of the ‘person’” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 192). Bodies can be modified in order to garner distinction (Bourdieu, 1984). Accordingly, to the Valley View mothers, being healthy means embodying an appropriate weight to height ratio, as evidenced by Sarah’s description of how the pool helps her manage and control her daughter’s weight:

you know Elise has had a weight problem now for about two years where we have been actively working with her. She does not know that, because we feel

that would be very detrimental, and she's not bad, but she's always been on the high end of her curves, you know she's always been in that upper 99 percentile of height and weight. But we're at a point now where that can't stay—like its natural when you're a baby and you're growing, but for a girl to be in that curve, is not a comfortable place. And our doctor had said, you know, it's time, and we've really tried to make a lot of changes, but being at Valley View over the summer is a great way for her to just be active physically without even realizing it. I mean that kid has a better workout routine than I do, and I'm trying to lose weight, you know, she just—it's great, and she's slimmed down already.

Through Sarah's explanation of Elise's weight issue, a girl that does not appear to me to be overweight, it is clear that she has engineered the pool into her daughter's life to combat a problem unbeknownst to her. Sarah, like other moms, admits that her kids think the pool is just plain fun, yet she has some ulterior motives in their attendance.

Similarly, Lynn explained:

Eddie, maybe more particularly because of his asthma, and he fluctuates with weight because of steroid use, and because of just like, we went through a period of time, that like he really was unable to be as physically active as he wanted to or we wanted him to be, you know? So now that he is improving and we've really, as a family, worked hard at more physical activity because he can do it, you know we see the benefits that he's at a period where he's growing a little bit, and not widening at the same time. On a day to day basis it's hard to see, but if you look from like two months ago, he's much better than he was, and we're going the right direction, so from, like a physical body perspective, [swimming] is great exercise for him, like I'm able to see—it's slow—but some of the benefits.

Lynn was not as direct about the reasons why her family uses the pool so much; however she, like Sarah, indicates that the pool is a perfect activity for her son who needs to lose a few pounds. Their efforts demonstrate a concerted attempt to normalize their children's bodies, vehicles which serve as distinctive social markers illustrative of social class position.

Interestingly, while both of these mothers confess to using the pool to help manage and regulate their children's physique without them knowing, my interviews with the kids proved they were in fact aware of what swimming could do for their body. Madeline explained that swimming makes you "skinnier," Alex told me that "it keeps your body in shape," and Dana said that if you don't swim "you won't be in shape." Paige believed that swimming is good because "you won't get fat because you're like, because you work your arms and your legs, and in butterfly you work the chest area and you go like that, and then I don't know, it just makes you lose weight." Without question, regardless of what their mothers thought, the children seemed aware of being in shape, and fat versus thin, and had concluded that it was important to be thin. Thus, these mothers' unconscious messages about being healthy, weight, and body image, or focus on cultivating physical capital, are being successfully transmitted, converted, and reproduced in and through their children as a result of their Valley View membership.

While some mothers use the pool for weight maintenance, many believe this is not necessary, yet reference the production of physical capital and their children's bodies in other ways. For instance Jessica said, "my kids aren't really over weight, and I never really worry about them getting enough exercise, they're active kids and they sleep well, and they have healthy appetites, and they're generally good." Jessica indicates that her kids are healthy, and is confident in this due to a variety of factors, including weight. Likewise, Kristen remarked:

We are active and fitness oriented, but unlike a lot of families that may be oriented that way, there's no element of weight watching as part of it, because we're slim, and even if we—girls cover your ears when I say this—but I think

even if we didn't do anything active and we were terribly unfit, we would be thin.

Both Kristen and Jessica emphasized that they are aware of the fact that they have naturally slim, healthy kids, but nevertheless, make sure that they are raising healthy upper-middle class children, and thus stress physical activity. Kristen's comment to her daughter's to cover their ears is further proof of her emphasis on producing healthy children who do not have body issues, and are focused on physical activity for the full range of benefits it offers. These mothers demonstrate that the quest for physical capital through swimming is also related to the development and embodiment of a healthy lifestyle, representative of their social class location. Like Jessica and Kristen, Rachel explained to me that "I don't think that my kids have any weight issues. Just genetically speaking, we have skinny genes. I want [my son] to gain weight, hopefully he'll gain muscle, [but] I'm not going to have him working out just yet." While Rachel indicates her children are not overweight, she alludes to the opposite problem by expressing her dissatisfaction with how skinny her son is. Over the past four years, Rachel and her husband have confided in me that they use swim team to help their son build muscle and overcome his smaller physical size and weakness. In our interview, Rachel again confessed, "his body holds him back a little, unfortunately. His mind, his heart's there, but his body just needs a chance to catch-up." Rachel speaks to the production of physical capital as well, however indicates that her son needs to gain weight and muscle, rather than lose it as Sarah and Lynn explain. Further, the mothers consistently commented that they were not at all focused on their children's athletic aptitude (discussed at length in chapter three). Therefore their remarks about their

children's bodies illustrate a desire to produce a form of corporeal physical capital geared toward outwardly expressing their upper-middle class habitus, rather than specifically targeted at athletic prowess. Appropriately, the upper-middle class swimming body is related to the maintenance of weight—not too fat or too thin, the quest to be physically active, and a sense of confidence regarding body image. In other words, they are working to cultivate healthy bodies that function as a markers of distinction and class position, and thus, are emblematic of their upper-middle class habitus.

Injury prevention. The mothers also discussed the production of their children's swimming bodies in relation to injury prevention. Heather told me that swimming "is not hard on your body," and Lila believed, "it's less taxing on your body I think than a lot of sports." Stephanie felt that swimming is "a really good exercise because you are not getting the impact." Kelly explained to me that she is a runner and because of knee injuries she cannot run outside anymore and has to use the gym, but she believes swimmers do not have to worry about these types of orthopedic problems. Kristen alluded to the same idea, mentioning swimming as:

is a great primary or alternative form of exercise when other forms are not an option. So, in the dead of winter when it's too cold to go out for a run, but you know, if you have access to an indoor pool, or all kinds of injuries, I don't have to tell you, you know it's a great thing to do when you're injured and can't run or bike or even ski, I mean all the therapeutic ways that people use swimming as form of exercise because it's good on joints and all that. And yeah, that's part of why I wanted them to be able to be good swimmers and have that as a form of exercise.

According to Kristen, the production of her children's swimming body is related to their ability to be physically active, or healthy, even through injury, as fitness and physical

activity is a necessary, routine daily lifestyle practice for her family. She also alludes to access to an indoor pool and a sport such as skiing as naturalized components of her lifestyle, again signaling her family's class-based privilege. Similarly, Tracy told me of swimming:

You know it's a lot of coordination, but it's low impact so my kids aren't gonna have injuries, I mean if they started running like they did swimming, you know I don't know how they would fare, you know, from the pounding type injuries, I know little kids can get those, and that probably wouldn't be good for them. But [swimming] is easy at their age for them to go and master, well not master, but be able to [do].

Tracy is concerned about preserving her children's bodies, and believes that swimming will alleviate any orthopedic issues her children may acquire from repetitive pounding. While of course swimmers can get injured just like other athletes, the women really advocate the physiological advantages of swimming, and work to promote it in their children's lives so they will embody a well-rounded source of physical capital that will enable them to be physically active in a variety of ways.

Through physical capital, members of the dominant class are able to "*define their orientations towards the body and lifestyles as superior, worthy of reward, and as, metaphorically and literally, the embodiment of class*" (Shilling, 1991, p. 657, emphasis in original). Physical appearance and healthy bodies are powerful class-based signals to others, and further, represent a distinctive, hegemonic ideal demonstrative of an individual's class based control over their lives (Cockerham, 2005; Korp, 2008). Healthy bodies exude cultural and physical capital, and good health, and signify the ability to be "used or consumed for something, namely the ability to work, to live longer, feel good, etc." (Cockerham, 2000, p. 1314). Ultimately, the mothers felt that the development of

physical capital through swimming was important, because as Kelly explained, swimming “is good for your body,” and it “is one of those great, great modes of exercise that you can do your whole life.”

A lifelong leisure pursuit for all ages. Like Kelly mentioned, all of the mothers definitely acknowledged swimming as an appropriate exercise because of the lifelong benefits it can offer participants, an important component of upper class leisure pursuits (Ostrander, 1984). Lacking an age limit thereby encouraging lifelong involvement, lends swimming, as a physical activity, more prestige and exclusivity (Bourdieu, 1978, 1984). Thus, the upper-middle class swimming body is cultivated at a young age, and signals an investment in children’s futures as Valley View membership operates to promote children’s lifetime swimming participation. Physical activity habits formed during childhood often carry into adult lives (Duncan et al., 2002), and like Tracy revealed, “hopefully we are instilling some good habits into our children from what we do ... being physically healthy is important.” Likewise, Barb hoped that her “actions are showing [her kids] [that the pool] is a healthy thing and it’s something good to do.” I believe the women’s attitude is anchored in their upper-middle class habitus as it speaks to important lifestyle practices that have influenced participation at Valley View and in other health and exercise-oriented activities (Cockerham, 2005; Williams, 1995).

Consistent with their social class position, Heather referred to swimming as “a great lifestyle thing,” and Lila even noted that perhaps swimming is the best lifelong sport “because you really can do it forever on your own and you don’t need a partner.” Cathy verbalized something I have noticed after all my years at Valley View, “we have a

fair number of older people who come and they swim because that is a sport you can do when you are older.” She felt that this elderly presence at the pool:

sets a nice example, even when the kids will just watch the people who come to swim in the swim lanes, and they see them come at all different times, you see people come in after work, I can remember last summer when I was there more, there was an older woman, I don’t know if you can remember her, I mean I’m talking late 70s, early 80s, she could’ve been 80, and she would come and swim, and her husband would sit underneath the awning and watch her.

Many women spoke of senior citizens they knew who were still participating in swimming in some way, leading them to believe, like Tracy mentioned, that swimming “is something that [the kids] could do forever as exercise or leisure, however they would treat it, hopefully as exercise.” Multiple mothers commented on both the sport and leisure aspect of swimming, indicating the importance of not only swimming, but also their membership to Valley View. Barb believed, “I think it’s something you do for your whole life and you enjoy, whether it’s in pool with your friends or family versus competitively or whatever, I think it’s just something that we’ll do for many many many years.” Along the same lines, Rachel commented, “this is something they’ll have forever, even if they don’t stay on swim team forever, they’ll always have this, and feel comfortable in the water, and swimming as an exercise and sport.” For example, Sarah told me:

I also love that it’s a life sport, because for me, being in very bad shape for many many years, it’s wonderful to have swimming to go back to, it’s one of the few sports you can come in and out of, you don’t have to be the best swimmer to still get a good [workout], you know? And that’s really important down the line, I think that they’ll appreciate that they have that skill. Elise, you know if she stops ice skating, she’s not going back in as an adult to skate for her exercise, she’s just not gonna do it, you know?

Sarah clearly references the fact that her children can participate in swimming all their lives, over and above other activities that adults generally do not do. Further she indicates, like the others, that her daughter will be exercising when she is older, and therefore alludes to swimming skills and experiences as investments designed to prepare Elise for lifetime of being physically active. Consequently, these Valley View youth are growing up with a taken for granted assumption of pool membership, as well as a subtle, naturalized understanding of the lifetime benefits of swimming, features which I believe are constitutive elements of their upper-middle class habitus.

Similar to Sarah's sentiments about ice skating, the emphasis the mothers place on swimming rather than other sports is quite clear. In one instance I spoke with a mother at the pool who told me:

I like things like tennis and swimming and golf. You know, you're not gonna play soccer—people don't go, 'oh I'll see you tomorrow, you know we'll all go play soccer when we're 40' ... but you can always swim laps in a swimming pool. You can always play golf which is fabulous, and tennis ... I mean, you're not gonna become an incredible karate person, and you're not gonna hip hop so, that's why I like those things, those activities.

This mother was not the only person to reference swimming, tennis, and golf, or other 'country club sports,' as having more value than other activities. Many of the mothers praised all three as sports they hoped their children would continue into adulthood because of the social value accrued from them. Lauren advocated these sports, in opposition to "gymnastics or something," because she felt they were "very social, and I think it will be useful," and Heather referred to them as "good social sport[s]." Hence children's Valley View swimming participation, facilitated by their parents economic, social, and cultural capital, acts as an agent of class reproduction. Specifically, swim

skills are illustrative of physical capital, interactions at Valley View yield gains in social and cultural capital, and the possession of these capitals can help children earn valuable economic capital later in life. Therefore, through Valley View, familial capital, and thus social class privilege, is converted, transmitted, and reproduced in and through children's acquisition of a swimming body. Not only are the Valley View mothers making a concerted effort to have their children playing the sports that they perceive will bring them social and cultural capital, but they are also subtly investing in their children's futures by promoting the corporeal and lifelong health-related benefits swimming can offer.

In addition to the mothers many comments regarding swimming as a lifelong activity, they also discussed age at Valley View in relation to children of all ages interacting with each other in a mutually beneficial way. For example, Nancy believed that kids of all ages playing together was a distinct anomaly, particularly as it compared to her childhood:

I was very impressed this year, in particular, I don't know if it's because my kids are little bit older, or we really spent a lot of time there, but it's incredible how you can see older kids, from 18 to 6 or 7, playing together all the time, and I think that's great. I grew up, and I was 14, I never—you know I never thought about playing with a 6 or 7 year old, it was like annoying. But here it's like completely different, everybody's so friendly, so it's nice, really nice.

Nancy indicates that this atypical behavior is very prominent at the pool, and it demonstrates yet another important element of Valley View that leads to its distinctiveness. Lynn, like Nancy, mentioned that the teams are a unique social opportunity for her children, and that older teenagers pay a lot of attention to her young sons and it has been a wonderful experience for them:

I don't know if it's just particular for us, but the older kids that really wouldn't give these kids the time of day and would be like brushing them off and could be in their own circle, like are treating them like they care, and they're helping and they do see that, and little guys feel good about that attention ... I don't think that other teams necessarily have that kind of spirit among the participants in the group.

In addition, she told me that she also sees her kids "cheering on for some random older person, and like, that wouldn't be something that would happen in a different sport."

Lynn's observations about the teams appear to be universal as many women commented that social integration across all ages was an additional reason why the pool is important for their children, and recognized it as an intangible benefit they have never seen with any other organization. Cathy said, "it is a unique swim team thing, so supportive of each other, so positive of each other, big kids taking care of little kids, kids taking care of each other." And Heather believed, "I feel really strongly about a team being five year olds to eighteen year olds. What other sport can you participate in where you feel like you have an 18 year old cheering you on and they're saying go, go, go, right?" Heather also remarked about how people of all different ages using the pool sets a great example for her children, and believed that part of this age continuum meant that "when you were young you were respectful, and now that you're older, you're a leader," a progression that is a wonderful benefit of pool participation. Heather indicated that this growth opportunity continued as her older children matured and became coaches or lifeguards, maintaining their ties to swimming and Valley View. Sabrina mentioned the same ideas as the other women, and added that in addition to the age benefit, the swimming and diving programs offer a chance for both boys and girls to be on the same team, a very rare and beneficial opportunity (cf. Slear, 2007):

I mean we think it's a great thing for our kids because we love that it's all different ages, so that the little ones have role models to look up to, so as they get older they become—the responsibility is on them to mentor the younger ones and to develop team spirit and to be leaders. And we love that it's boys and girls, and it's just a rare opportunity I think with sports that you could have that variety of people on a team.

Many of the mothers noted that they liked this facet of the pool as it offered their children a chance to build social capital through play, socialization, and competition with children of both genders, an idea that they believe is important to raising healthy upper-middle class children³.

Overall, the interactions that children of all ages have at the pool are highly regarded by the mothers as they believe these relationships are significant in helping their children gain valuable physical, social, and cultural skills crucial to reproducing their upper-middle class habitus. Further, Valley View signals an investment in the future as the lifelong benefits of swimming will help children maintain healthy habits, and cultivate their class-based swimming bodies, or physical capital. Through Valley View membership, parents can subtly demonstrate important behaviors, practices, family values, and life skills to children (Shaw & Dawson, 2001). These important lifestyle characteristics are transmitted in and through families with the express purpose of reproducing healthy, physically active, and equally privileged future generations.

Embodied consumption habits and the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle.

Through my time at the pool, and as I observed during my interviews at these women's homes, it was clear that food was a very important component of building embodied

³ While there were some very subtle gender differences that emerged through this project, ultimately the production of physical capital and the reproduction of the upper-middle class lifestyle appeared largely gender-neutral, like these mothers allude, particularly as it related to this age range (6-10 years).

capital, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and teaching children healthy habits. These upper-middle class families utilize their economic and cultural capitals in purchasing what they believe to be the right foods to build physical capital in the form of strong, healthy children. Members of the dominant class more often adhere to food dietary guidelines in deciding what to consume, and further, women who have young children make better food choices for themselves and their families than does any other group (Roos, Lahelma, Virtanen, Prättälä, & Pietinen, 1998). Bourdieu (1989) argues that learning and acquiring tastes for class-based appropriate foods contributes to the production and development of one's habitus:

Habitus is both a system of schemes of production of practices and a system of perception and appreciation of practices. And, in both of these dimensions, its operation expresses the social position in which it was elaborated. Consequently, habitus produces practices and representations which are available for classification, which are objectively differentiated; however, they are immediately perceived as such only by those agents who possess the code, the classificatory schemes necessary to understand their social meaning. (p. 19)

Therefore, an individual chooses cultural goods, such as food, that "suit[s] their position," and thus it is clear that "nothing classifies somebody more than the way he or she classifies" (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 19). The ability to perceive the relationship between particular practices and consumption patterns with food (or any other cultural goods) speaks to a particular level of cultural capital, an additional factor which dictates eating habits (Bourdieu, 1984). Cultural capital exists in the embodied, objectified, and institutionalized states, and through each, depicts a specific status position based on distinctive dispositions, qualifications, and consumption patterns (Bourdieu, 1986). The way in which one consumes (both purchasing and swallowing) particular foods becomes

a marker of their class status and an “indicator of both taste and lifestyle” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 177). Cultural capital, particularly in its embodied form, “implies a labor of inculcation and assimilation, costs time, time which must be invested personally by the investor” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244), and as a result, physical maintenance through both exercise and diet is a marker of health and moral value (Bourdieu, 1984). Nutritional behavior and physical activity are both related to the production and possession of cultural capital as “values attached to health, knowledge about health effects of certain food products and norms that guide health behaviours are all cultural resources that structure people’s preferences and choices, including their eating and physical activity habits” (Abel, 2008, p. 3). Accordingly, the mothers discussed food choices (in addition to the aforementioned physical benefits) as they related to the development of their children’s healthy lifestyle and swimming bodies.

Countless mothers have mentioned to me over the years that they wish the ice cream man would stop coming to Valley View once an hour, because their children are so tempted and they do not like to have to continually say no. Tracy told me she “wish[ed] the smoothie truck would come instead.” Many mothers explained to me they have rules about the ice cream truck, for instance, their children are allowed to get something once per week, or they are only allowed to get clayboys⁴ because they are healthier. Sarah emphatically explained to me:

my kids know [when] the ice cream truck comes around it’s a no ... I’m just not going to succumb to that anymore, because that was counter to what we were

⁴ Clayboys are shaved ice covered in flavored syrup served in a cup with a Swedish Fish on the bottom. They are a Valley View tradition and are served out of the back of a pick-up truck that plays Harry Belafonte’s calypso song, “Day-O,” as it drives into the pool parking lot.

getting. But we do—if clayboys comes I don't mind, clayboys is like always the exception because it's not as bad, and it's tastier and whatever ... and when Heather used to be selling the pizza at the pool, it used to be like ugh, another pizza night, I can't do it, those kinds of things add up ... they're getting the calories, why would I do that to them? Especially with our goal for Elise, why would I put myself in that position?

All of the women expressed the same sentiments as Sarah in terms of food at the pool.

Many explained that over the past few summers their kids have learned their boundaries with ice cream at the pool, and in fact, the more active their children are, both playing and in pool programs, the less they wanted this unhealthy snack.

Additionally, multiple mothers noted the lack of a snack bar at Valley View. Rachel told me:

I'm ambivalent about there being a snack bar, because I know other pools have that, and I'm like God, that would be nice sometimes for it to be there, but it would probably be stocked with junk and I'd be saying no to that every time.

Rachel indicated that she only fed her children healthy food, and liked that Valley View enabled her to do this. Likewise, Nancy said she and her family have been to various other clubs and pools that have snack bars and everyone will just "sit down and start eating," but at Valley View its nice because "you take something from home, and ... just [go] for the fun of the pool and the sport." Many mothers felt, as Sarah said, that Valley View was:

a very healthy place to be. It's also healthy because it doesn't have access to a lot of the foods and different things that you might do at different places. You know we're out of the house, we don't bring a lot of junk at the pool, we don't have bags of chips—I would bring nothing rather than bring a lot of that stuff. So we're not like swimming for an hour and eating it right back, and we come home and they're hungry for real food, like if I grill something, they're all gonna eat whatever it is, and that's not always the case otherwise, you know? But I think it's promoted a good healthy feeling from them, it's a healthful way to spend a summer I think.

Sarah continued to tell me that her “kids are just very happy if I bring fruit” to the pool, and she believed “your appetite changes after you’ve been at the pool,” and therefore you want healthier food. Like Sarah discussed, many mothers preached the value of a healthy diet for their kids and detailed how they have implemented fresh fruits and vegetables in their children’s meals. The mothers’ tastes for particular foods are in accordance with their social position as their economic and cultural capitals have allowed them to make certain choices. They implement particular foods in their children’s diets because of their effect “on the body, that is, on its strength, health and beauty,” or their ability to build physical capital (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 232). Further, through children’s class-based patterns of food consumption, they come to gain an important sense of cultural capital that will help them make healthy choices in the future. For instance, Barb explained how her kids are extremely healthy eaters and consume a lot of “brain foods”:

They have to ask me every time they want something sweet, and we limit sweets, and we limit fruit juices. Our kids are fabulous eaters, they’ve been eating avocados since they were two or two and a half—chunks of it every night on their plate unless I do something else green like broccoli. They love broccoli, they love avocado, they love carrots, they love, they just love salmon, they’ve been eating salmon since they were two and a half. So a lot of the brain foods I’ve been giving them ... a lot of people are so impressed that they love salmon, and they both love it so much, they ask for it.

Barb also told me that her children “have never had white bread,” only whole wheat.

Similarly, Lauren commented to me that “healthy food is a big priority ... they have never had a hamburger in their life!” And Tracy told me, “I try to feed them healthy food at home and set a good example there as well.” In fact, I documented the following situation with Tracy and her husband, Jim, in my field notes:

Jim was getting Billy ready to go, and says to Tracy, ‘ah, I’d love some Popeyes fried chicken tonight.’ Tracy says, ‘what?’ and Jim says to [assistant coach], ‘have you ever had Popeyes? Isn’t it delicious? We were at a barbeque last weekend and I had a piece, and I hadn’t had any in years, and it was spectacular.’ Then Tracy responds to everyone around, ‘our family doesn’t eat food like that. Jim, I have tilapia filets that I bought at the store today. It will only take me 20 minutes to cook—we can go home right now.’

This conversation demonstrates very clearly that Tracy, as the mother, is in charge and is the parent who is putting a strong emphasis on healthy eating. And further, shows that she has declared fried chicken and fast food as unhealthy and bad for her family, thereby illustrating her class-based preferences for particular types of foods and consumption behaviors. Multiple mothers, like Reilly, explained that their children “definitely know what healthy food is,” and the difference between healthy and unhealthy food. Margaret believed that her work to educate her daughter on a healthy lifestyle will ensure that “when I’m, gone, she will know the difference between good food and bad food, exercise and no exercise ... Those two things will be there, because I’ve planted them since they’re tiny.” Margaret felt that this knowledge will help her daughter to be in “the best state that she can for her DNA.”

Many mothers emphasized the connection between food, exercise, and a healthy lifestyle, particularly as it pertained to Valley View. For instance, Faith explained to me that her children think the pool “is a place of fun, they love it, they associate it with good things to eat, good friends to play with, things that are exciting to do, and they love it.” The experience that Faith discusses her children have at Valley View is one which she controls directly. The “good” food is something she dispenses, and the “good friends” share her family’s upper-middle class habitus. Accordingly, Faith’s Valley View

experience is a concerted attempt at transmitting an appropriate, “good,” lifestyle to her children (for a complete discussion of “good” people at Valley View consult chapter two). Cathy also discussed the idea of forming a healthy lifestyle through a combination of food and exercise:

Michael has caught on very well, Alex—he’s still developing. If he could eat chicken nuggets every night, he’d be happy. So we want them to be aware of you know, a healthy lifestyle, and that encompasses not only the eating, but trying to expose them to athletics and any kind of exercise.

These messages and instructional opportunities were clearly being received by the children as evidenced in my interviews with them. For instance, Paige discussed with me that she makes sure to eat something “that’s healthy for you because it’s good to eat before swimming and will give you more power when you’re swimming which like adds up to being a good swimmer.” She, like Cathy, described the connection between healthy food and exercise, and further, the way in which food choices help cultivate her swimming body. Similarly, after asking Gary what a healthy person means, he told me:

A healthy person means a strong person, and then I guess, I added this, and maybe a little, a nice person, and a person that—let’s see, healthy, who is always in the mood to eat good food and only eats like candy or snacks like once in a while. ‘Cause a lot of my friends, my mom always, we always have snacks here, we usually eat fruit—[it] is one of the things that we do. Because I’ll ask them (his friends), ‘do you want anything to eat, like fruit?’ And they say, ‘no, what do you have?’ And then it’s like, ‘I don’t know, what are you hungry for?’ And then [my mom] offers fruit, and they’re like, ‘no I don’t like fruit.’

Gary’s explanation of a healthy person includes someone who is strong, nice, and eats healthy foods, like fruit, instead of candy and snack food. This message comes directly from what he has been taught by his parents, and illustrates not only the conversion of parental economic and cultural capital to youth cultural and physical capital, but also,

the transmission and reproduction of their family habitus which is predicated on their upper-middle class beliefs, values, and practices relating to a healthy lifestyle. For instance, Rachel, Gary's mom, explained to me:

my mother-in-law has so many health issues, she has not taken care of herself over the years, so we make it a point to tell [them] the repercussions, the things that happen, because they don't know as kids—they eat all these grapes and they eat all this stuff, and here's why. They're too young to know what's gonna happen. I think they're astounded when other kids don't like strawberries or they don't eat other fruits—they're like, 'what?' I mean Sasha's like, 'doesn't everyone love strawberries?' And I'm like 'some kids don't eat fruit at all.' So we kind of talk to them about everything that's going on in that sense.

Rachel's description of how health and food are interrelated is important to understand how these upper-middle class mothers use teachable moments to educate their children on their version of a healthy lifestyle. Further, Rachel's description demonstrates that there is a class-based ideology to food consumption as she remarks that there are some people who do not eat any healthy fruit. However, it is not clear whether Rachel believes that parents who do not feed their children fruit are negligent, or lacking in economical capital, or both. Either way, her family's food consumption garners them distinction as different classes categorize, purchase, and implement healthy foods into their diets in different ways based on their available capital (Bourdieu, 1984). In addition, I believe that Rachel's statement indicates the way she, like the other mothers, feeds her children is a marker of her upper-middle class habitus and an "indicator of both taste and lifestyle" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 177), as foods "are objectively attuned to one's position" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 190). Ultimately the women's food choices and attitudes towards their children's consumption are not only emblematic of their social position, but also an illustration of their unconscious lifestyle

tastes and practices integral to their upper-middle class habitus (Cockerham, 2005; Williams, 1995). The women's concerted attention to their children's diets speaks to their effort to transmit and reproduce important cultural capitals, in and through their children for the purposes of building distinctive physical capital. They engage their pool membership to help cultivate their children's swimming bodies through techniques related to weight control, body image, lifelong participation, injury prevention, and an array of healthy habits, including food consumption. Thus, through Valley View and their swimming bodies, children are unconsciously acquiring the tools to live a healthy, physically active lifestyle, expressive of their upper-middle class habitus.

“The Medical”: Preventing Future Health Complications

As Rachel alluded to in her discussion of having her children eat healthy food to ward off health-related problems, all of the mothers were concerned with protecting their children against future medical issues, an additional way in which Valley View functions as an investment in children's futures and bodies. Not only are the mothers focused on producing children who are physically healthy, they are concerned with internal health as well. For example, Reilly told me that she is mindful of “keeping [the kids] healthy now and it's easier for them to stay that way.” Many others discussed the important, internal corporeal health benefits they feel that swimming brings their children, for example, Cathy explained it as, “wonderful for their heart and it's great cardio vascular[ly],” while Lynn emphasized the importance of swimming as it relates to combating medical issues:

It's an important part of keeping yourself healthy, and you know other medical stuff, whether it be like heart, cholesterol, whatever the issue may be like, it's all

part of our family tree, you know we're all conscious of doing what we can to be healthier, and swimming is definitely on the top of that list.

Overall, the mothers found swimming to be a vehicle to improve endurance/stamina, breath control, lung development, cardiovascular health, and muscle strength and toning. Some, like Stephanie, even explained fears about "the whole scare about the obesity and the type II [diabetes], I just always have that in the back of my mind a little bit, [so] it's nice if they're physically active." Lauren said she believed swimming "makes [the kids] stronger, and it's healthy, it's a lot about just health issues." Tracy felt that the pool and swimming "brings physical benefit," and that her children are "definitely getting to be stronger athletes" based on their swimming skills and the physical activity time they spend at Valley View. The mothers whose children participate on the swim team mentioned the benefit their children got from, as Rachel put it, "the whole physical training aspect." Many spoke of the improvement they saw in their kids over the course of the summer, and how the exercise of swimming laps was excellent for their children's health.

It is important to note, however, that many of the mothers believe that their kids do not have a full understanding of the exercise they are getting when they are at Valley View. Kelly told me that she does not talk about the health component of the pool with her daughters because when they are there, they "are happy, they're getting exercise but they don't even think about it, it's just fun," and Faith said "I don't think that [the girls] are like I want to go to the pool because I want to exercise, I think they just want to go to the pool because they think it's a lot of fun." Lynn called the exercise

opportunity “a major plus” because her boys are at the pool having fun while they are getting physical activity. She continued discussing her son’s participation at the pool:

he does recognize that he’s doing exercise, and he’s having fun while he’s doing it, which is like a lifelong issue that would be nice to not look at it as a horrible chore—that I gotta exercise and I hate it. And he looks at it as this is fun exercise and he can carry that on into young adult[hood] and throughout life, that you know, [exercise] is an important part of keeping yourself healthy.

My interviews with the children confirmed the women’s contentions that they had fun and enjoyed their time at the pool. The following excerpts are some responses to the question, “tell me why you like belonging to Valley View?”:

Ah, well what's more fun? I mean, it’s a nice day and um, we're playing around ... we're going to the pool and we're just having fun with everybody ... I love the diving board ... I love it all, it’s just fun. It’s all fun! (Alex)

Because it’s basically the only fun thing to do during the summer. (Dana)

It’s really fun just to get going with other people and just do swimming and have fun. (Ingrid)

It’s fun there. (Jenna)

Because it’s fun. (Madeline)

It’s really fun. (Kaitlin)

Because it’s just so fun, and I think it’s a really fun thing to do during the summertime so that’s why I love it so much. (Meghan)

You can play, you can swim, you can invite other people, and the ice cream man comes. (Andy)

Unanimously the children felt that Valley View was “really fun” in the summer. They looked forward to the summer because they could go to the pool, and during the summer they looked forward to each day they spent there. This sentiment was illustrated by Emma when she told me “during the summer, if I were to divide my brain

into different parts of what I was thinking about, it would be about 60% Valley View, 20% camp, 20% other. So it takes up most of my summer thoughts.” Given these children’s fondness for Valley View, it is clear that the mothers very effectively engineered the pool into their childrearing practices with the goal of promoting swimming as part of a lifelong commitment to health and physical activity. This concerted, yet subtle effort to use the idea of fun at the pool to overshadow the exercise component inherent in swimming was clear through Reilly, who told me that she thinks her older daughter understands that being at the pool is exercise, “but we don’t call it that,” for fear that she will grow up to worry about her body image amongst other things. Similarly, Linda confessed that she and her husband “have kind of brainwashed [our sons] into swimming because it is good for your breathing.” Many of the mothers subscribed to the philosophy described by Sabrina:

I don’t know if I say swimming will make you strong, it’s just like you give your kids vegetables and fruit, but you don’t torture them with it. You know what I mean? If you try to shove it down their—you know? If you’re just kinda mellow about it, they don’t even know it’s happening. You know what I mean, they get it by osmosis, more than you know you have to exercise five times a week. It just becomes part of their healthy lifestyle.

Sabrina’s description of her children learning a healthy lifestyle by osmosis is entertaining, but appears to have worked. My interviews with the children again confirmed that they have received definite messages about swimming as a healthy activity. Andy told me that exercise “keeps you being healthy and strong,” and swimming specifically is good for your “legs and your whole body. And, I guess your neck because if you breathe to the side.” He also said that swimming is about “breathing, exercise, and being healthy ... like so you don’t have like high blood

pressure, [or] something like that.” Alex believed that “it’s good I think for your arms and legs and muscles there because they really get them working.” Evan said that swimming helps his bones and makes him more flexible, while Billy felt that swimming makes you stronger, builds your stomach muscles, and “helps your lungs get bigger because you have to hold your breath for kinda long.” Gary told me, “you swim, you get hungry, you eat, it makes you stronger and healthier.” All of the kids mentioned elements of the pool or swimming that contributed to them living a healthy lifestyle, clearly indicating the transmission of their parents’ ideas regarding the production of a healthy lifestyle and their swimming bodies. Accordingly, through Valley View membership and the associated intangible learning opportunities, these families’ embodied social class privilege is being successfully converted and reproduced in and through their children.

The mothers also discussed other ways in which Valley View membership contributes to their family’s health. For instance, Cathy maintained that through the pool the kids “get a place where they can be autonomous, they can be safe, people are looking out for them, people know them, and they’re getting physical activity and sun, and health, it’s great.” The connection between all of these benefits children can gain by being at the pool is both unique and important (these ideas are discussed at length in chapter three). Heather remarked that the pool “is really healthy exercise, it’s good clean fun,” and continued by saying at the pool:

nobody smokes, you’re not allowed to smoke at the pool, you’re not supposed to have alcohol at the pool ... and the pool closes at 8:30, so it’s not like people—the kids aren’t seeing adults late at night, you know there’s nothing sort of unhealthy that could go on.

Heather's comments indicate other important parts of a healthy lifestyle, aside from the actual exercise component. Like Cathy, she alludes to the safety factor, and the bad things that can happen after dark. Heather also explains how the pool is alcohol and smoke free, thereby emphasizing two very important, class-based components to living a healthy lifestyle that are a reflection on individual choice and moral worth. Abstaining from smoking or drinking, and further, maintaining a proper diet and engaging in exercise, comprise a "pattern of practices that constitutes a lifestyle" (Cockerham, 2000, p. 1314). These behaviors are related to the possession of "cultural capital in the form of values, perceptions, knowledge and behavioural norms," and are naturalized in certain cultural groups and demonstrative of social class position (Abel, 2008, p. 2). Further, Heather references the development and maintenance of a healthy lifestyle by explaining that "nothing" bad happens at Valley View, because in part, it is a socially segregated, restricted space, and consequently the only people who occupy the space are other white, upper-middle class members living the same privileged lifestyle (a more complex discussion of social segregation can be found later in this chapter).

The dangers of the sun. The only stumbling block the mothers saw to the pool being a perfect experience for their children was the sun. Yet it did offer children an additional learning experience contributing to the management of a healthy lifestyle, as Heather expressed, the pool taught her kids to "be smart about the sun." Many mothers, like Faith, who explained to me that her father is a dermatologist and his influence, combined with the "way we view sun now and stuff," perceive the pool to be a little bit dangerous. As I observed in my time at Valley View, sunscreen is a big issue at

the pool. Parents who drop their kids off make sure that each child has their own bottle of sunscreen with their name on it, and they particularly like the new spray sun block because children can apply it easier on their own. Additionally, most parents whose kids are at the pool playing in the middle of the day have purchased surf shirts with UV protection for them to wear in the water in an effort to avoid the hassle of having to apply sunscreen and/or risking sunburn. Overall, the mothers believe that the sun presents a very real danger, and they take the appropriate precautions to keep their children safe. For example, Lila who has had skin cancer before, explained that the sun “is a big piece that limits us. We have light skin and have to be more careful.” She continued to say, “unfortunately I don’t think the sun is that healthy ... and in a way, that puts a damper on the pool for me.” Lila said that she prefers to go to the pool after four in the afternoon because the sun is not as strong then. Margaret echoed this sentiment, telling me that it’s better to be there later “because of the sun, it’s kind of hard to keep on putting all that cream and stuff on, so it’s a good time, four o’clock rash guard, or no rash guard and just cream, at the end of the day.” Tracy said the same: “the nice thing about going at four in the afternoon [is] because the sun is not as strong. I worry about that a little bit, but I think they are pretty safe with sun screen.” And Sabrina told me that after the five o’clock hour “you don’t need sunscreen on them.”

However, evidenced by these families use of the pool, their fears about the sun are not stopping them from attending. Rather, the mothers are taking specific, directed measures to ensure that their children are shielded from the sun through application and reapplication of expensive sunscreens, UV protective shirts, and managing the time

they spend there. These behaviors are all distinctive markers of their healthy lifestyles as they use their economic and cultural capital to prevent their children's future health problems. Additionally, the mother's management of their children's exposure to the sun indicates their class based power and control as they "legitimise a vision of health and healthy living based on their own specific desires and needs," choosing to make the pool safe for their children, rather than risking their health or abstaining from the pool (Korp, 2008, p. 24). I believe this health-oriented behavior illustrates the way that the Valley View families' daily lifestyle practices revolve around the "considerations of health outcomes" (Cockerham, 2005, p. 51), and further, is emblematic of their upper-middle class habitus.

"The Mental": Intangible Health Benefits

While Valley View impacts physical and mental health related issues, the mothers also indicate that pool membership promotes children's health and well-being, or the "mental" benefits. In no way was the idea of mental health implied in the clinical sense, rather it is a metaphorical understanding referencing the mind and spiritual health benefits of fresh air, communicating, and enjoying oneself at the pool. The mothers describe the way in which Valley View helps create "well-balanced" and "well-rounded" children through intangible experiences related to being outside and away from electronic media (computer, video games, television), surrounded by community, and interacting with a diverse group of people.

Getting outside and away from media. According to the mothers, another healthy feature of the pool is the fact that it is located outside. Like Kelly said, all of the

women found it important “to be outside and be healthy, and you know get fresh air, and not be inside all the time, and it’s good to get off your bottom and move.” Kelly also told me that “I guess that’s why it was a priority for me, because sitting inside is not what I consider a healthy lifestyle, you look for ways to get outside, and [Valley View] is the perfect way to do it.” Rachel explained that one thing she likes about the pool is that “we’re not cooped up here, and the kids are getting exercise and getting to see their friends.” Tracy told me, “I am a big believer in spending a lot of time outside, and that’s one thing I just love about Valley View, it’s outdoor time, it’s physical time everyday.” On average, Americans devote less than 20 minutes to physical and leisure-related activities, yet being outside in the fresh air is “*an essential investment in our children’s health*” (Louv, 2006, p. 120, emphasis in original). While many people do not have the benefit of a pool membership to facilitate outdoor recreation, the Valley View families do, and work to take full advantage of their privilege on behalf of their children.

For the mothers, being outside was significant simply for the fresh air and physical activity, and it became doubly important because it provided a great way to get their children away from the television, computer, and video games. Keeping their children away from the media is an additional way the mothers regulate and control their childhood. Through media exposure, children can be privy to content depicting unhealthy behavior, be it of a physical, dietary, sexual, or violent nature, to name a few. Conversely, Valley View offers productive, healthy physical time, which means, like Jessica explained, children “are not sitting in front of the television.” Stephanie confessed that the pool is “just a nice way to have a good time, spend time, and feel

like—it's also you know, they're not watching TV or something that you're feeling a little guilty about." Sabrina explained that getting away from media and into the fresh air was important, thus going to the pool:

means that the children are not sitting in front of a screen because children nowadays will sit in front of screens for as long as—you know, they'll sit there all day. So to me it means, it really is good clean fun, they're outside, they're active, they're using their imagination, and they're getting physical activity, and they're getting fresh air.

Likewise, Heather said of the pool:

you're outside, and you're in the sun, and if you're not swimming or playing, you're reading a book, and isn't that a great thing? Like there's no electricity, there's no TV or anything, you're outside, like you're not at home, so I think it totally promotes a healthy lifestyle because there's no video arcade, even when we've gone on vacation before, I don't like going to a resort that has one of those places where you can stash your kids inside and ... I'd rather have them, you know, take a walk along the beach and look for shells or something, I don't like that kind of thing—we don't do it here.

The mothers were adamantly against their children spending too much time with media, and particularly in the summer, they wanted them to be outside playing. Nancy said that after her kids come home "they go straight to the couch, straight to the TV, so for me [the pool] is something to get them away from everything else, and just you know, spend the energy that they have there." Similarly, Faith said that when she sees her kids "lounging on the couch watching TV, I'm like alright we're going to the pool, because I don't want you hanging out here, there's just no reason on a beautiful day to be sitting in front of the television, so we're going to the pool." Ironically, it is interesting to note that the mothers are using their resources to belong to Valley View purposefully to avoid their children using the video games, computers, and televisions which they purchased. Hence the pool operates as a consumption choice used to

escape other forms of consumption, an idea which I believe is characteristic of their upper-income lifestyle.

Remarkably this idea of children being outside and engaging in physical activity was echoed in my interviews with the children as well. For instance, Dana said to me that going to the pool “helps us not really like lying around and everything, you have to kind of move.” Jenna told me that if you don’t go to the pool “you will be really lazy” which was bad “because then you won’t be able to do anything.” The children’s comments made it clear that the mother’s messages about inactivity are getting through to them. Accordingly, they demonstrate the successful conversion and transmission of their values, beliefs, and practices, and therefore the subsequent reproduction of their social class privilege. I believe the philosophy that children should, as Kelly explained, “get off your bottom and move,” is a marker of these families’ upper-middle class habitus.

The importance of the pool community. In addition to the more obvious physical activity benefits that the pool offers, one of the other metaphorical “mental” benefits that the mothers discussed was the development of a deep and important feeling of community at Valley View. However, this community feel is nothing more than a euphemism for the production of social capital, and further, the social segregation that characterizes membership. Community means “being meaningfully connected to something smaller than the nation and larger than themselves” (Dalton, 2005, p. 15), a sense of belonging that is important to these families. Multiple mothers praised the pool for having, as Rachel noted, “a community feel” that she did not have

in her own neighborhood but thought was important. Spatial arrangements in the suburbs can be isolating, but swimming pools operate as common, albeit private, spaces that bring families together (Wiltse, 2007). Belonging to a pool club becomes an “investment not only in money but in neighborhood co-operation, enjoyment and friendliness” (Wiltse, 2007, p. 194). The families in this research gravitate towards Valley View for these reasons.

Those families that live in neighborhoods across, adjacent to, and behind the pool, explained Valley View as an extension of their neighborhood community. Kristen enjoyed the way that the pool offered her kids “a sense of community rooted right here in their neighborhood.” She continued to tell me that the pool has been:

part of our experience of living in this neighborhood, and the way that we’ve made friends in the neighborhood. [The girls] go to an independence school, they don’t go to the public school, so one thing that we really love about Valley View, is [it is] a way for them to connect with the neighborhood, you know immediately [the road], but also just the surrounding area, beyond [the road]. It’s given them a nice opportunity to get to know neighborhood kids in way that through school, they wouldn’t have.

These connections, bonds, and relationships formed at the pool in the summer do in fact represent an additional and important social network, both for parents and children, and thus the pool functions as a physical space to build social capital (discussed at length in chapter two). Reilly told me that it is fun to be active and social, and therefore she “love[s] the idea of the community. I think it’s just kind of community and meeting new people, and having friends that live in your area, in your vicinity, and having my girls make friends that way too.” She felt it was important that her daughter made friends at the pool and in her neighborhood because “they’re just at that age

where they're bonding, and I think a lot of the people in the area stay around for a long time, so it's good to build these strong little friendships now." The themes of community and socialization were reiterated in my interviews with children as well. For instance Billy told me that he felt like he belonged at Valley View "because it's where I am about a quarter of the summer." Emma and Dana both said to me that they felt like Valley View was "our pool," indicating a distinct sense of belonging and comfort. Emma told me that she thought it was healthy to "be around all kinds of people" because she could "socialize." She also said it is nice:

to see the same people over and over, I mean it's nice having new people, but seeing the same ones is kinda nice because like if you take, say, I don't know, a dance class or whatever, once a week, you see them once a week, and you know, I mean I guess you could make friends there, but it's harder than if you see them every day.

Overall, both the children and mothers indicated that they felt safe and included in the Valley View community. Yet, evidenced by their discussion of "summer friends" (discussed at length in chapter four), the majority of these families were not great, lifelong friends. However, they clearly placed value on getting to know people in their immediate surroundings and broadening their social connections, in part because they believed it to be a healthy practice. The mothers felt, like Lila verbalized, "just being with family and friends is healthy," and the pool offers an opportunity to engage in socialization. Nancy asserted that meeting new people is healthy and "it's very easy to make friends [at the pool]." Elizabeth referred to Valley View and the sense of a community environment that has developed around it as "a relaxed little oasis in [The] County that you don't find everywhere here." Overall the mothers like the pool because

it is relaxed, comfortable, and allows them an escape from the pressures and schedules of their everyday lives, and therefore they believe it is a healthy place for their families.

Sabrina, who spoke of community both more adamantly and fondly than any of the other mothers, believed that without question, “community is good for your family.” She found Valley View to be “another great community to be part of for the summer” as it is a place “where people know us, and we know them, and we feel sort of safe and comfortable there.” Sabrina explained that overall:

I just feel it’s just a safe place for them, so that you can, so as a parent you can sit back and let them be independent, but what’s nice, is because it is a community and one day somebody’s gonna say, ‘well, Gavin you shouldn’t be doing that.’ You can kinda allow—I mean it takes a village you know? Which is so hokey and Clinton-esque but it’s true. And I like that atmosphere where everybody knows who your kid is, so they’re gonna be looking out for them.

Sabrina felt both connected and part of Valley View, as did all of the other families I spoke with. She, like many of the mothers, brought up the idea of safety as another important feature of community. Sabrina explained to me that because she has a special needs child, community is a very important component of the pool because it gives her son “a place where he can feel safe and people are kind to him.” In another example, during our interview Kristen engaged in conversation with her daughters who were sitting with us, and said, “between your coaches, and parents that you know, like you know if Daddy and I aren’t there, you know it’s a nice community, and there are, at any time, at least five people that could help them if they needed it.” This idea was conveyed throughout all of my interviews, and the fact that parents felt that their children were safe at the pool is significant. Even the children expressed this sentiment in their discussions with me, telling me that there will always be people that they know

around the pool if they needed help. Kristen went on to say, “so the fact that [the girls] feel that way, and have friends there, and feel connected ... it’s something they value and enjoy, and love being a part of, so it’s worth making sure we are around for it.”

Similarly, Lynn told me that the pool offers:

a really nice sense of comfort for the boys, like they truly feel like it’s home away from home in the summertime, and you know, they know the guards, the guards know them, you know there’s there not always—you know, it takes a while for them to have that sense of comfort, and like its instantaneous for them [at Valley View], because it’s such a natural comfort zone for them.

The idea that children feel comfortable at the pool is an additional reason why parents enjoy being there, and why kids are able to develop a sense of confidence and independence through their participation at Valley View (discussed at length in chapter three).

Ultimately, however, this safeness and community feel developed in and through the member families speaks to the lived reality of their socially segregated lives, as the community they feel a sense of belonging to is one populated by white, upper-middle class families who share the same habitus. The “natural comfort” characterizing the Valley View experience is related to “the harmony of habitus,” and an embodied sameness that members see in each other (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 82). Habitus implies both a “sense of one’s place” and also a “sense of the place of others” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 19), and structures social encounters and relationships (Bourdieu, 1984). Accordingly, I believe that the sense of community characterizing the Valley View members lived experience at the pool, is a feature of their socially segregated, upper-middle class

habitus, which is shared, reinforced, and reproduced in and through interactions with others.

These competing ideas of community and social segregation were expressed clearly by Margaret who believed the pool represented “a great insight into the American way.” Born in Brazil and having lived around the world, Margaret continued to tell me that being members of the Valley View community has been a great way to immerse herself in “the real America ... to just surround myself with that way, and see the real good people, the real moms that are caring for their children.” However, her contention that the Valley View club represents “the real America” is highly problematic in that what it actually represents is the top five percent of all Americans by social class, among many other privileges. Her myopic view of America is mediated by multiple upper-middle class communities that she is involved in, one of which is Valley View. While the sense of community that Margaret and others derive from their membership at the pool appears to be both beneficial and comforting, it is clear that their sentiments are rooted in their taken for granted interactions in their upper-middle class cultural field(s). Additionally, the women’s common sentiments for their socially segregated pool community speak to the mostly white identity of members, an idea which is rarely a conscious consideration, yet continuously reproduced through their club membership (Long & Hylton, 2002). Whiteness and “exclusion ... shape the cultural field(s) that white Americans now inhabit” (Frankenberg, 1994, p. 75). The Valley View families white, upper-middle class identities afford them social distance from minorities as they inhabit mostly white neighborhoods which were constructed through the historical racial

structuring of their community (Frankenberg, 1993). While the mothers believe wholeheartedly in the sense of health, comfort, safety, and socialization that their Valley View membership has provided them, by way of their various forms and levels of capital, the class and race-based exclusivity and superiority evidenced through their comments is a staggering example of their social class privilege. Ultimately, members draw on the important sense of community they feel at Valley View in order to develop and promote a variety of capitals in and through their children, while at the same time using the idea of community to advance the socially segregated nature of their lives.

An “international flair”: Diversity at Valley View. As previously discussed, Valley View, as a recreational space, is constructed through race and class hierarchies as members subscribe to the SNAF, are mostly white, and upper-middle class. Their familial dominance is linked to these largely invisible factors, particularly as it relates to their embodied whiteness. Whiteness is “a complex, often contradictory, construction: ubiquitous, yet invisible; normalized and normative; universal, but always localized; unmarked, yet privileged” (King, 2005, p. 399). White people tend to “benefit from being white whether or not, as individuals, they hold supremacist notions, harbor racist sentiments, or are made anxious by the physical presence of peoples of color” (Hartigan, 1997, p. 496). In a position of privilege, one is not able to accurately assess the effects of racism on their lives, “nor the significance of race in the shaping of U.S. society” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 9). Additionally, they tend to ignore the systems of race that construct “the maintenance of all-white neighborhoods, the ‘invisibility’ of Black and Latina domestic workers, [and] white people’s fear of people of color,” all ideologies

that *should* demonstrate the relationship between whites and people of color, yet often do not (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 70). Many white people understand their own lives and privilege as “racially neutral,” rather than as shaped by race, and thus they do not to examine it any further (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 49). Accordingly, these taken for granted ideas reproduce racial hierarchies which normalize privilege in many different ways, including participation in sports and leisure activities (Long & Hylton, 2002).

Of the 20 Valley View women I interviewed, 20% identified themselves as Asian and 80% as white. From my observations, this breakdown appears fairly consistent with the entire membership base, if anything, the Asian ethnicity identification is probably a bit high. Further, in my discussions with these women I found out that six of them are either immigrants or first generation American born, and come from South America, Asia, and Europe. Rachel discussed her culture, explaining to me that her childhood “was a whole different kind of lifestyle.” Others discussed their family’s cultural background, citing it as influencing their attitude towards sports, academics, and music. These cultural identifications are responsible for Sabrina’s comment that Valley View “Is diverse. Sort of—for the area at least, you know, ethnically, I don’t know, there’s people—it’s sort of an international flair.” Sabrina, like others, found the ethnic make-up of the pool membership to be diverse, however, as an academic observer over four years, I was very surprised to hear the women discuss “diversity” at Valley View, namely because it appears to be a homogenous, mostly white community continually reproducing white privilege. However, this recognition of diversity, no matter how small, “valorizes cultural difference but does so in a way that leaves racial and cultural

hierarchies intact” (Frankenberg, 1994, p.69). Accordingly, the Valley View mothers appear to manage their children’s access to multi-cultural experiences, believing that their membership to Valley View, a club maintaining a 20% ethnic population, speaks to diversity. Yet in reality, minority members occupying this classification are still upper-middle class individuals in families who lead privileged existences, and thus, are not likely to be considered ‘others’ due to their shared class circumstances. Like Pugh (2009) found in her work, Valley View parents do indicate a slight need to find their children diverse experiences, but in general, this is not with low-income or racialized others. The research discovered that upper income parents “seemed to prefer that inequality serve as an abstract lesson in charity and responsibilities of the wealthy, rather than as a concrete experience” (Pugh, 2009, p. 105). In particular, upper-income White and Asian families, like those that make up the Valley View membership base, seem to gravitate towards specific, safe, segregated, and controlled diverse experiences, rather than actually integrating their lives (Byrne, 2006; Pugh, 2009). While upper-middle class parents generally want their children to engage in diverse experiences, they prefer social contexts that isolate people from ‘others’ so there is not too much difference and their status is not threatened (Byrne, 2006). Parents view a complete multicultural experience as the “wrong ‘mix’,” posing a threat to children’s social development, and thereby attempt to manage their children’s access to diverse interactions (Byrne, 2006, p. 1011).

Nevertheless this identification of a small amount of difference at Valley View, or their managed access to multiculturalism, was very important to the mothers as they

believed it to be a healthy and necessary social experience for their children. Many women felt that in their competitive, fast-paced community, like Cathy feared, “[kids] are exposed to a lot that could sort of make them a little more insular and less welcoming and it worries me.” Therefore, Cathy believed that Valley View was important:

because I think it clearly gives [the kids] an opportunity to be exposed to lots of different people, and it gives them an opportunity to interrelate with different age groups which is great, and people coming from different backgrounds and different experiences and different cultures and all that. So I mean, it still [this town], so it’s not a total melting pot, but it’s better than a lot of the organizations that they have been asked to be part of.

Cathy’s quote surprised me, again because I do not consider Valley View to be diverse, but also because she pointed to it as more diverse than many other organization her family is involved in, an idea which I believe to be a constitutive element of these families’ white, upper-middle class privilege. Additionally, the term diversity typically refers to race and ethnicity, however, due to the lack of diversity at the pool, Cathy was also focused on the other types of difference she believes to be healthy for her children to be exposed to, such as age, culture, religion, and family. For instance, many mothers described elements of religious diversity they have encountered at the pool or in interactions with other members, and appeared to view it as an additional healthy benefit to pool membership. Sabrina said of Valley View, “my kids go to a Jewish school, so I like that [Valley View] is not all Jewish people, so it’s kinda diverse.” Yet, again, religious diversity represents a controlled interaction as this type of difference does not change the fact that relationships at the pool are not with racialized or low-income others, and are maintained within a safe, supervised, white, upper-middle class space.

In an additional example, Kristen, similar to Cathy's explanations of the pool as a site for diverse experience, labeled the pool as:

multi-generational—you know so if you're just hanging out at the pool, and it's not practice time or whatever, there's all kinds of people, our neighborhood has a lot of original owner people whose kids are all grown up and they're retirees or whatever. And more and more, pulling from beyond just this immediate area, you know [this development] and [that development]. I wouldn't go so far as to say diverse; it's not terribly diverse, but moving toward a little bit more geographic diversity anyway.

Kristen also explained the pool as not "terribly diverse," pointing to the classic sense of ethnic diversity, however praised it for reasons of multi-generational and geographic diversity, characteristics that she believed were healthy for her children. Without directly mentioning it, these women do seem to recognize the 'unbearable whiteness' (Coleman, 1996) of Valley View, yet are attempting to use the pool to educate their children about difference in other ways consistent with their upper-middle class, white privilege.

Parental Goals: "I want them to be Happy and Healthy"

Overall, membership at Valley View is emblematic of these families' general goals for their children because pool participation, as Cathy put it, "supplements and enforces our value system." Tracy offered, "Valley View definitely plays into what I guess our aspirations are for [the kids] ... there's a lot going on, on a daily basis there that can contribute to the type of people we want them to be." Without exception, the women indicated that participation at Valley View helped them (re)produce happy, healthy kids. Interestingly, many of the mothers did not elaborate on their specific goals for their children when asked, rather they told me matter-of-factly some variation of, as

Lila put it, “my overall goal for them is for them to be healthy, happy, well adjusted kids and adults.” Similarly, Sabrina noted that for her kids, “I want them to be happy and healthy individuals,” and Reilly explained, “I just want them to be happy, healthy people, good people.” Stephanie stressed confidence and happiness, and simply wanted her children to be “happy and feel good about who they are, and about what they’ve build for themselves as a life.” While Sarah said that her “overall goals for the kids are to be happy, connected people, and what else they do with that, they can decide.” Only a few of the women expanded on what they wanted for their children’s overall well-being, and how they planned to achieve that, but for the most part, these aspirations hinged on a strong foundation of happiness and health which they believed would take them where they wanted to go. For instance, Lynn responded:

Well, I obviously, I want them to be happy and healthy and you know to—like we talked about making decisions you’re proud of, and we could be proud of, and that you know, whether you’re with us, or you’re on your own, you represent us, so you make choices that people aren’t gonna say like, ‘I can’t believe the Ryan’s,’ you know whatever it may be—that they carry along, not just themselves, but were a team, were a package, and you know we expect that you show others that you are good people, and you make good choices. So that kinda carries on to, whether it be the pool, the playground, or you know the soccer field, you know what?—your actions speak about who you are. So, it’s not always easy, but you make good choices because that represents you, and it represents us, and you know the overall, just kind of making a path that you feel proud of and confident, and you know feeling good about those choices. They’re both different, and they both will have different paths, but as long as they’re happy, and again they’re healthy, then we’re happy.

Lynn’s comments indicate how important family reputation is to her, and how she is instilling this in her boys in an effort to manage their future status and social class position. She explains that their family is strong and they are a “team,” and therefore they need to represent themselves well by being “good people” who make “good

choices.” Nevertheless, like all of the other mothers, she repeats twice that her main focus is on raising happy, healthy kids, and she feels like the pool can contribute to achieving this goal.

Many of the women expressed goals that indicated their class-based “power over necessity” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 256). For example Jessica’s explanation indicated that she did not care if her children were not successful as long as they were happy:

I don’t have any [goals]—I want them to happy and healthy. I think that’s sort of in line with the pool, like I want them to enjoy it, and be nice to each other. The pool does encourage a lot, like healthy, being outside, it’s fun, it’s a good family activity. But, you know, in general I don’t even care if they’re mediocre as long as they’re happy. Totally unsuccessful in life but happy is good with me.

Jessica’s insistence on her children’s health and happiness over and above any personal success is interesting, and I believe it is characteristic of her upper-middle class position. She explained that she did not care if her kids were “mediocre as long as they’re happy.” After our interview was over it was clear Jessica had been thinking about the question for a while, and again repeated these sentiments and added, “and don’t get pregnant at 16—that’s it.” Jessica has no desire to push her children, nor has lofty goals for their personal and professional success, rather, like the other mothers, she was content if they were content. Her social class status allows her to feel secure in who she is, and thus she does not acknowledge that through her privilege, and taken for granted membership to health-oriented, capital cultivating venues like Valley View, she works subconsciously to reproduce it in her children. In a similar comment, Heather said:

I want them to find things that make them happy and have balance in their lives. I think money’s nice, but it would be nice if they found careers that really made them happy. And exercise obviously is a big—it should be a part of that.

Heather stresses exercise as the health component in her children's lives, and places a concerted emphasis on happiness over economic capital, a viewpoint which is indicative of her secure social position. In an additional example, Kelly told me:

I just truly want them to find something that they are good at, that they enjoy doing, and be happy. Yeah, and whatever it is, even if it's, you know, whatever it is, if it's working in a store, whatever it is as long as they're happy and confident in who they are and what they do. So you know, and I do think part of the trick is finding something that they are good at and that they enjoy doing, and feeling good about that and about themselves.

Kelly's comments indicate that happiness and self-confidence is paramount for her children, yet it is not important that they achieve any type of professional success because mediocrity, indicated by her mention that "working in a store" would be just fine with her, is perfectly acceptable. This comment is particularly classed in the sense that she alludes to "working in a store" as the lowest form of employment as opposed to a successful professional occupation. Like the others, Kelly believed that if her kids are happy and feel good about themselves they will be successful. Again, this attitude is only possible given Kelly's "distance from necessity" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 177), and her particular educated, successful, upper-middle class habitus, as she is able to transmit her familial status to her children thereby securing their future social position, even if her children are just in retail.

The attitude demonstrated by the Valley View mothers greatly differs from that of the middle class who tend to engage in concerted cultivation of their children in order to facilitate lifelong success (Lareau, 2003). Lareau (2003) argues that middle class parents stress results and achievement, and worry about their children's future social and professional successes. Illustrating a subtle, yet distinctive class-based difference,

the women represented in this project generally believe that as long as their children are both happy and healthy, they will have been successful parents who raised successful children. However, it is important to note that while these mothers eschew the ideas presented in Lareau's framework, they cleverly try to cultivate their children's cultural capital through enriching experiences, such as Valley View, in an effort to reproduce their social class privilege (discussed at length in chapter three). The maternal attitude of "finding something that they are good at and that they enjoy doing, and feeling good about that and about themselves," is strictly attuned to their upper-middle class circumstances. The mothers work hard to instill a deep sense of self-confidence in their children that will make them reach higher and understand, for instance, they should not be "working in a store," rather they should own the store, an idea that is implicitly conveyed through the Valley View mothers *upper-middle class* concerted cultivation techniques. The Valley View families do not stress accomplishment, rather their cultural field is a product of high achievement through which children gain exposure to other successful upper-middle class adults and families in their formative years, an experience that will subconsciously shape them into upper-income professionals in accordance with their habitus as they mature. The Valley View parents feel entitled and secure in their class position and are able to provide their children with the requisite experiences that will mold them into privileged adults simply by facilitating their happiness.

As far as the mothers are concerned, a major component of happiness, mentioned throughout this chapter, is health. All of the women wanted their children

to be healthy and believed participation at Valley View at such a young age would help them sustain a long, healthy life. For example, Tracy explained that she felt like Valley View was teaching her kids how “to be smart, mature, independent, you know able to make their own decisions, you know to be physically active, to make the right choices.” Many mothers indicated that the idea of Valley View as a healthy place, as Rachel explained, would encourage “health to be a central part of their [child’s] life,” because, as Nancy expressed, the mothers wanted their children to “grow [up] as healthy as they can be—mentally, physically, everything.” All of the women found themselves in a role where they were trying to build their children’s confidence, ensure their corporeal health, and facilitate their happiness, in order to reproduce their upper-middle class lifestyles in their children, and thus “maintain or improve their position in social space” (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 258). The family acts as an agent of class reproduction and is “the main ‘subject’ of reproduction strategies,” as capital is embodied in and transmitted through the family (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 23). Mothers specifically employed their Valley View membership as a reconversion strategy, using pool participation as a vehicle to produce embodied capital in their children—economic, social, cultural, and physical—as it represents “external wealth converted into an integral part of the person” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 245). The mothers spend time with their children interacting in the cultural field of Valley View in order to convert and transmit their familial capital through children’s participation in swimming (Shilling, 1991). I believe that club membership is an important component of these families’ habitus, and accordingly, participation at

Valley View provides a physical space to facilitate the transmission, conversion, and reproduction of social class privilege.

In this chapter I have described the way in which Valley View provides families with the opportunity to interact in their class-based cultural field, learn unconscious dispositions and behaviors in accordance with their habitus, develop distinctive tastes for particular goods and services, and receive particular forms and volumes of capitals (Bourdieu, 1984). Specifically, I have argued that Valley View offers children a distinctive healthy lifestyle, emblematic of their upper-middle class social status, through particular, directed physical, medical, and mental benefits crucial to their well-being. From a physical standpoint, the mothers work to cultivate their children's class appropriate swimming bodies. They advocate the pool in their children's lives because it helps with weight maintenance, body image, and injury prevention. Further, these women believe that membership promotes swimming as a lifelong activity, and both the sport and their pool membership are useful in reproducing their families' health-oriented upper-middle class lifestyle. Medically, the Valley View mothers utilize the pool as a physical space for their children to engage in activity that will prevent future health complications. And lastly, they believe pool participation promotes intangible mental and spiritual benefits in their lives, such as being outside in the fresh air, and interacting in a diverse community. Ultimately, the women interviewed feel that their job as maternal figures is to produce happy, healthy kids, and they perceive their pool membership as facilitating a happy, healthy childhood. However, as I discussed in this

chapter, and to a greater extent in subsequent chapters, Valley View is a socially segregated white, upper-middle class space, illustrative of these families lived experience of privilege. Accordingly, members emphasize their familial pool membership in an effort to reproduce their economic, cultural, and social capital, and also to develop their children's sense of cultural and social capital, and assist them in gaining lifelong physical capital. Valley View provides a distinct physical space for the acquisition of these important, embodied capitals, and the tools to live a healthy lifestyle expressive of their upper-middle class status.

Chapter II: The Upper-Middle Class Family Habitus and the Reproduction of “Good People”

Bourdieu defined the family as “a set of related individuals linked either by alliance (marriage) or filiation, or, less commonly, by adoption (legal relationship), and living under the same roof (cohabitation)” (1996, p.19). He believed the family unit was extraordinarily powerful, and consequently, responsible for both the social and biological reproduction of the social order, social space, and social relations (Bourdieu, 1984, 1996). Often this is because marriage, to begin with, reproduces the social structure as it tends to be between partners of the same social class status (Bourdieu, 1984; Erikson, 1991). The families at Valley View adhere to the definition of the SNAF, a family structured with legal heterosexual marriage of a man and woman, in which the man is the main breadwinner, and the woman, while she may be in paid employment, is primarily responsible for maintaining the household and custodial care of children (Smith, 1993). While this structure is no longer the norm for many American families, it is still considered a “highly visible hegemonic ideal” (Messner, 2009, p. 176). The “SNAF anchors individuals in a privileged social/spatial configuration and activates a distinctive range of spaces that distribute social benefits so as to reproduce North American hierarchies of gender, racial/ethnic, class, and sexual privilege” (DeVault, 2003, p. 1297). Bourdieu (1996) explains that this arbitrary, but nonetheless normal, naturalized concept of the family has become “a privilege instituted into a universal norm” (p. 23), and offers those who subscribe to it a social advantage, over and above their other

social class indicators as “family identity [is] one of the most powerful principles of perception of the social world and one of the most real social units” (p. 25). This advantage, Bourdieu (1977) argues, arises because the family offers children formative learning experiences to witness “the true principle of the organization of domestic space” (p. 92) in which men and women demonstrate a “sexual division of work” (p. 91). The SNAF, as an advantaged institution, leads to the reproduction of both social class and embodied gender positions in and through children, and thus becomes the most important and prominent mechanism to facilitate the process by which class-based privilege is transmitted to future generations (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1996). Families “tend, unconsciously and consciously, to maintain or increase their assets and consequently to maintain or improve their position in the class structure” through their relative volume of capitals, possession of reversion “instruments,” and power relations between themselves and other social classes (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 125). The family “is one of the key sites” for the accumulation, conversion, transmission, and subsequent reproduction of social class position (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 23).

This SNAF structure is a taken for granted notion as it appears so normal and has existed for so long, a fact which, for those who have it, characterizes their lived experience of privilege, and adds to their familial power and control. Bourdieu (1996) explains that “one of the properties of dominant social fractions is that they have particularly extensive families ... that are strongly integrated because they are united not only by the affinity between *habitus* but also by the solidarity of interests” (p. 24, emphasis in original). Accordingly, privileged classes are permitted to stay dominant

because of their ability to conserve and reproduce class-based power relations between themselves and others. Dominant families function to educate children about their particular cultural beliefs and practices, and construct their tastes and preferences, and thus the institution of the family is “one of the constituent elements of our *habitus*, a mental structure which, having been inculcated into all brains socialized in a particular way, is both individual and collective” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 21). Bourdieu further explains that the family “functions, in habitus, as a classificatory scheme and a principle of the construction of the social world and of that particular social body, the family, a principle which is acquired within a family existing as a realized fiction” (1996, p. 21). He alludes to the idea of a family habitus which operates as a structuring structure, extends to schooling, sports and recreation, practices and beliefs, and forms tastes and distinctive lifestyle patterns (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1996). The family habitus allows an understanding of American family life as it “refers to a historically and socially situated system of dispositions and the family activities associated with them” (Coakley, 2006, p. 160; see also Dukes & Coakley, 2002). It relates to a class-based lifestyle which includes the operation of daily and family lives, and specific parenting and child rearing practices put in place to facilitate the transmission and reproduction of social class privilege, including the acquisition of various types of capital and lifestyle characteristics (Coakley, 2006; Dukes & Coakley, 2002). Further, the family habitus involves the employment of collective familial capital, including economic, social, cultural, and physical, in order to transmit, convert, and reproduce social class position. Little academic attention has been given to the concept of a family habitus, however it has been used to describe

middle and upper-middle class families by Dukes and Coakley (2002) who examined parental involvement in competitive youth swimming, and located familial commitment within the family habitus; as well as Coakley (2006) who theorized that family participation and support of youth sport is grounded in the family habitus. While the scope of this chapter, and the project in general, does not expressly discuss youth sport or competitive swimming, it draws on both these papers, as well as Bourdieu's ideas on the family and his generative concept of habitus, to delineate what I believe are the empirical dimensions of the family habitus.

The families who took part in this research are upper-income, white, and privileged, falling securely within the dominant fraction of Americans (for more information on their demographic profile, consult appendix C). From the maternal perspective, this chapter empiricizes the constitutive elements of the upper-middle class family habitus through an in-depth examination of the way in which the 20 Valley View families appropriate their pool membership into their lives. Specifically, the mothers reveal that their need to be involved at the pool is born out of their desire to be around "good people," their own family tradition, and a strong belief in the value of their children's swim skill development. Further, through their familial participation at the pool, the mothers believe that they are able to spend valuable family time together, time that serves to teach children important, class-based social and cultural skills. I argue that the pool functions as a significant physical space for parents to facilitate the conversion, transmission, and reproduction of their social class privilege in and through children. However, through members' emphasis on family and class reproduction,

participation at Valley View has the unintended consequence of creating an exclusive, socially segregated, upper-middle class environment with largely impenetrable boundaries which operate as symbolic markers of their social status. Ultimately, I believe that Valley View membership, and the distinctive techniques of childrearing and class preservation that occur at the pool, are illustrative of the upper-middle class family habitus.

The Desire to be Around “Good Solid People”

Evidenced by the remarks from the Valley View mothers, I believe the upper-middle class family habitus is grounded in a strong desire to be around “good solid people,” as Barb, like other mothers, mentioned in discussing her family’s concerted choice to join Valley View. She continued by explaining her observations that “families that are involved in swimming and swim team, we’ve noticed ... they’re just really, you know, good families, and good people, like you know, they’re just the kinda people we want to be around.” Soon after, Barb again repeated her sentiments:

I think our desires to get our kids swimming is to be in with a good group of folks, who are that involved in their kids’ lives, and also swimming is just a good, good sport, for you know, your health, and also just to be around solid families. There’s a lot of reasons we like it.

Lynn shared Barb’s affinity for the membership base at Valley View by asserting that “there’s a lot of good people there, and a lot of good families there,” and further, that her family shares “common ground with a lot of the families” at the club. Tracy built upon this contention explaining that the pool is helping her kids to make “the right choices and ... being there is teaching them so much about themselves and what they can do and how to be good people.” Similar to the women’s descriptions of feelings of

“belonging” at Valley View (discussed at length in chapter four), these references to “good people” and the “right choices” are euphemisms for being around other upper-middle class white people who embody the same class habitus. These families enjoy being at the pool and believe it is a “good” place to be involved due to the taken for granted nature of the “harmonization” of their “experiences and the continuous reinforcement that each of them receives” through other members “similar or identical experiences” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 80). Thus, the identification of Valley View as a place where other “good people” spend time, effectively valorizes each family’s decision to belong, as they surround themselves with other “families like us” (Lynn), who help to reinforce and reproduce their lived experience of privilege. I believe this choice to be with “good solid people” is characteristic of their upper-middle class family habitus, and further, a statement on their unconscious social segregation from people not like them, as the “wrong ‘mix’” can threaten social stability and class position (Byrne, 2006, p. 1011). While Valley View does not deny members who can afford to pay, it is no coincidence that it is filled with like-minded “good people” who have “common ground” (Lynn) with each other, phrases that are code for privileged race and class-based identities, as well as similar familial values, practices, and beliefs which have shaped families’ choice to belong.

The classed and raced implications in these statements are augmented by comments from mothers, like Lauren, who claimed that the pool is an “environment” filled with “nice people” where, as Lynn put it, “nothing bad happens.” Tracy elaborated a bit explaining, “I can’t imagine that the pool would ever be a bad place or a bad

influence for [my kids]. I can't imagine that they'd be hanging out with the wrong kids, or having any bad experiences there." The women saw Valley View as a serene, peaceful, private space for, like Sabrina offered, "good clean fun." However, while these mothers see the pool as an idyllic physical space for their families in the summertime, in actuality, their fondness for their membership speaks to their complicit participation in this socially segregated community. Valley View, as a recreational space for swimming, is raced, classed, and gendered, and as such, creates insiders and outsiders, and shapes the contemporary relationships and practices of those who belong (Douglas, 2005; Frankenberg, 1993; Fusco, 2005; Messner, 2009). Whiteness, an invisible position defined by wealth and privilege, is rarely considered as an issue, yet is continually replicated in and through physical culture, particularly in more exclusive sports such as golf, tennis, swimming, and skiing (Coleman, 1996; Darnell, 2007; Long & Hylton, 2002). White people tend to benefit from the taken for granted organization of society (Hartigan, 1997), and "are 'enlisted,' materially and ideologically, in [its] continued operation" (Frankenberg, 1994, p. 75). Thus Valley View membership, illustrative of privileged position in society, offers these families a mostly white, upper-middle class, exclusive leisure-oriented environment where their continued presence and social interactions function to reproduce both their embodied Whiteness and their social class status.

Family Tradition: Escaping the Heat and Building Life Skills

Motivations for belonging to an exclusive club, such as Valley View, are anchored in family tradition as the experience that one's parents have with recreational habits

often shape that of their children (Cote, 1999). In my conversations with the mothers, I asked specifically about their own experience with swimming as a child, and found that with only one exception, every one of them (and their husbands) had some type of relationship with swimming during their formative years. This fact, in and of itself, is a marker of their social class position as swimming is an activity largely pursued by the middle classes (Bourdieu, 1978, 1980, 1984). Over half of the mothers belonged to either a country club or a swim and tennis club as a child, a few belonged to their community or town pool, a couple noted backyard pools, and some others who grew up in the mid-west explained that pool culture is different there, but that they regularly swam in lakes. Though almost all the women and their husbands had a pool affiliation as children, some recalled their childhoods as a bit more financially restricted than their children's lives are now, and described going to the pool, as Cathy put it, "our big luxury for the summer." Listening to their childhood descriptions, it appeared that many subscribed to the middle-class habitus, and as Ehrenreich (1989) explains, the marrying of two middle-class professionals often results in upper-middle class positioning, perhaps explaining many of the Valley View families' current social status. The women's recognition of pool participation in their childhood as one of few luxury experiences undoubtedly influenced their membership to Valley View, as these families unconsciously acquired the subtle, class-based understanding that pool membership is important to have for a variety of reasons. Further, the mothers that belonged to country clubs or well-to-do swim and tennis clubs in their youth, did not indicate finance

as an issue in their childhood, and therefore perceive their club membership as mandatory for their children because it is so naturalized in their own habitus.

For many mothers, as Nancy put it, swimming is “family tradition.” She explained:

my dad swims everyday. My brother swims I don’t know how often, but he was a swimmer, and he still swims, [my husband] and his two brothers, they swim all their life, and they still [do]. It’s like you know, we always tell [our kids], you can choose any other sport, but you have to swim, if you don’t want to compete, [fine].

Overall there is a clear link between the parents’ own childhood and what they want for their children today. For example, Stephanie commented, “we both in our own way have positive memories of summer and pool time so I would say definitely we kind of wanted the kids to have a little bit of that.” The family tradition aspect of swimming is an important consideration as formative experiences represent an important entry requirement for participation, and serve to reinforce the “socio-cultural and corporeal meanings” these families have attached to swimming (Giulianotti, 2005, p. 163; see also Bourdieu, 1978, 1984). I believe this family tradition and emphasis on swim club participation is characteristic of the Valley View members embodied upper-middle class family habitus.

In addition, all of the mothers associated summer with having a pool, explaining, as Jessica did, that “I think it has to do with my own childhood.” The following comments illustrate this idea:

I would never want to have a summer without having a pool. (Margaret)

I can’t imagine a summer without a summer swim club. (Heather)

I think of summer as you spend a lot of time at the pool. (Cathy)

Don't you associate summer with swimming? (Jessica)

Tracy said, "it is important to us because I think it really defines our summer, you know, it actually—summer starts for us when Valley View opens," and later said, "you know, it's our summer." Implicating her children, Cathy observed, "I think for the boys in particular, when they think of summer, they think of Valley View. And it is a large component of their summer activities." Faith felt the same way, "I mean it's their (her kids) pool, like it's the pool, and that's what they think about when they think about the summer." The mothers also described the pool as the only place to go in this area during the summer because of the oppressive heat⁵. For instance they remarked:

I love to be outside in the summer, and [here] it's so hot and buggy and humid, we can't be outside ... I mean we can go for a bike ride in the morning, but then it just gets too hot in the afternoon, you can't be outside ... [the pool] is the only way we can do it. (Kelly)

First of all, I mean it's hot. When it's hot there is nothing else to do other than go to a pool. (Jessica)

Escaping the heat. I think it's nice to have a place to go to cool off. (Heather)

It's just to hangout and relax and cool off because it's so dang hot around here. (Sarah)

You know it's so hot here that that's a good place to do it, it's where you can be, you know, cooled down. (Tracy)

⁵For reference, average high temperature in this area are 81, 85, and 83 degrees Fahrenheit for the months of June, July, and August, respectively (Average Weather, n.d.). While I suppose those numbers are open to individual comfort zones, most days it is not unbearably hot. In fact, what is interesting about these comments is over the past four summers and in many of the interviews, multiple mothers have expressed their concern about both the air quality in this area as well as the intensive UVA and UVB rays that their children soak up when at the pool. Clearly the hot weather, in the moment, trumps their concerns over skin cancer and lung issues (for a discussion of the dangers of the sun, consult chapter one).

Kristen, agreeing that it was too hot in this area, particularly given that she grew up in a “much cooler climate,” explained, “I couldn’t imagine, you know raising children in the summer and not having access to a place to swim.” In my field notes at the end of the summer I documented a comment from a mother who knew what I was researching, however was not part of the 20 women interviewed:

She then asked me, well so, what did you find out about all of us folks who just “while away our summer at the pool to get away from the heat?” She went on to say that that’s really why they belong to the pool—it’s something to do and the best way to be outside in the heat.

I believe not being able to imagine a summer without a pool and needing a place to relax and cool off is representative of the Valley View members’ upper-middle class family habitus, “a belief system and lifestyle that encompass[s] identifiable dispositions and practices related to social class, family life, parenting, [and] child development” (Coakley, 2006, p. 160). Many Americans do not have access to a pool, let alone a club membership, yet the Valley View families do not acknowledge their privilege. Rather, their pool membership is viewed as mandatory, and has become a naturalized component of their lived summer experience.

In part, perhaps this need for the pool is due to the emphasis the women have placed on their children’s acquisition of swim skills for their own corporeal safety. Many mothers referred to swimming as a “life skill,” an additional reference indicating their social class privilege. For instance, Margaret told me in no uncertain terms, “I think children should be able to first learn to walk, and then they learn to ride a bike, and they learn to swim ... swimming is one of the three things my child should know.” Likewise, Linda, the only mother that did not learn how to swim as a child, adamantly told me, “I

don't want my kids to be like that, I want them to be comfortable in water and not be scared." She referred to swimming as "the most basic skill [my kids] should learn." Kelly also believed it was important for her kids to learn as children because it is easier to acquire swim skills at a younger age. All mothers felt that it was important for safety reasons:

[Swimming] seems like something that is just so essential in a way, safety-wise. (Stephanie)

Swimming ... is a sport that can save your life. (Nancy)

I just think that we both feel it's a safety issue. (Barb)

For safety's sake I think it's really important that they at least know how to tread water and all that stuff. (Jessica)

I think that swimming is so essential for safety and fitness and just a really important part of a child's life, I mean it needs to be something you need to learn, a skill you need to learn. (Faith)

These safety concerns had a personal connection for many women, in particular, Elizabeth, who revealed, "my sister drowned when she was little, so that was very much like a motivator for me. Like in my family, you have to learn how to swim." Of these 20 families, Elizabeth has the only home with a private pool, making the need for her children to learn to swim that much more acute. Similarly, Reilly told me that since her family has a Lake House on a deep lake:

swimming is not an option for my kids. They will swim, they will take lessons, they will know how to swim. And you know, ballet is an option, and soccer is an option, but swimming you must do because I think it's a life skill.

Kristen said that both she and her husband, without question, "felt strongly, [the girls] are going to learn to swim, and learn to swim well." For all of these families, while

swimming skills are not forced upon children, they are also not an option, which is one additional reason why Valley View is so prominent in their lives—it offers a fun, family-friendly place to teach children valuable swimming skills. Based on their family tradition and experience, the mothers strongly believe in belonging to Valley View in order to facilitate their children's acquisition of the "life skill" of swimming. However, none of the women acknowledge the regimes of both race and class privilege affording them their membership. I believe their convictions regarding the value of swimming, as well as their attitude towards their pool membership, are both representative of their upper-middle class family habitus.

Moral Capital and Foolish Parents

The fact that so many mothers referred to swimming as a good "life skill" speaks to the moral value of having a child who can swim. In today's world where parents are responsible for children 24 hours a day, seven days a week, their own moral worth is defined by their status of being a 'good parent,' and thus dependent on the moral character and successes of their children (Arendell, 1999, 2000; Coakley, 2004, 2006; Pugh, 2009). Accordingly, children become "moral capital," and upper-middle class parents feel obligated to "invest" in their futures by providing them with appropriate, sought-after experiences (Coakley, 2006, p. 160). Through my discussions with the mothers, it was clear that they feel they would be parental failures if they could not teach their child to swim nor provide them with the opportunity to swim. In my field notes, I documented a conversation with Jessica, who lives 25 minutes from the pool and simply cannot get her son there often enough to participate on the swim team, yet

he would be happy to do it since he enjoys swimming. She asked me, point blank, “do you think I’m a bad mom because I don’t have Adam on swim team?” I responded of course not, because, of course not enrolling a seven-year old in swim team does not signify a ‘bad mom.’ However, the fact that Jessica verbalized this feeling indicates that providing requisite swim experience for children equates to parental moral worth. It was clear through all the Valley View mothers that a certain amount of parental merit hinged on children being able to swim. For instance, Lila explained, “it’s such a great skill to have to swim, I mean everybody should know how to swim.” Faith told me:

all of [my friends] have the same kind of feel that it’s an important skill, and you know everyone’s always talking about lessons and making sure that we can get our kids to learn and swim well and safely, so I think it’s an important thing, for my kids it’s important.

Lila’s recognition that “everyone” should swim, Faith’s description of “all” her friends making sure their children have the required swim skills, and Tracy’s comment that “anybody can learn, anybody can do it,” again only refers to the everyone and anybody who has access, financial resources, and time to learn to swim. The women’s comments fail to acknowledge the regimes of power and privilege they invoke through their exclusive club membership and subsequent swim skills. I believe this taken for granted understanding is illustrative of the Valley View families’ lived experience of belonging to the upper-middle class habitus.

Further, in a very telling statement, Heather confessed to me, “when I hear people tell me they don’t know how to swim, I think that is a really foolish parent.” The sentiment that a “foolish parent” equates to someone who does not teach their children to swim was pervasive throughout my interviews. For instance, Cathy relayed a story

about her son's end of school pool party (at Valley View) at which there was a worried, frantic mother fearing for her daughter's safety because she could not swim. Cathy commented, "I was so taken that we had a nine-year old who did not know how to swim." This mother subsequently joined Valley View shortly after the party, and enrolled her daughter in private swimming lessons as she recognized her moral failure, and used her economic capital to rectify the damage she believed she had caused. Both Heather's and Cathy's remarks speak to the idea that in this particular upper-middle class culture that views pool membership as a fluid part of their lifestyle, not only are swimming skills a natural, expected part of children's lives, but the lack of swimming skills are such an anomaly that it signals parental failure. Thus, through the Valley View mothers, it was clear that there was an obvious sense of moral capital tied to children's swim skills. However, interestingly, there was not any premium placed on how good of a swimmer any one child was, rather it was about children being proficient enough to safely enjoy their swim and tennis club membership, and other water-oriented activities, such as sailing. I argue that the commitment to make children water safe demonstrates an additional feature of the Valley View members' family habitus, as they employ their economic capital in order to facilitate a swim experience for their children, thereby securing the social and cultural benefits it may bring them in the future.

Cultural Capital: Learning to Swim ... to Sail?

Bourdieu (1984) argues that the dominant classes are defined by their relationship between economic and cultural capital, and the way it corresponds to their lifestyle. As discussed, member families employ economic capital to offer their children

the distinctive opportunity to learn to swim as they believe it is a “basic skill” or a “life skill,” or accordingly, a form of cultural capital. Without exception, the women pointed to their children learning how to swim as a culturally valuable skill, often framing safety as imperative during enriching, distinctive, upper-middle class water activities, such as sailing, water skiing, and surfing. For instance, Jessica explained that her husband had recently taken their seven year old son and five year old daughter sailing, yet she was hesitant about her daughter’s swim skills, therefore she was enrolling her daughter in lessons so she could be safe on a boat. Stephanie echoed this feeling telling me, “if you’re going sailing ... everyone should be very comfortable swimming.” Margaret said that she wanted her daughter to have strong swim skills so that she will be safe “if she is ever in a boat [and] we go canoeing [and] we go rafting,” while Linda explained that she doesn’t want her sons missing out on being with friends at pool parties, water parks, and the beach. Kristen directly stated that her goal for having her daughters’ participate in the Valley View swim programs is to “learn to be a very proficient swimmer, [so] you know then, having them wherever you are, swimming, you can enjoy a lake, water activities, an ocean, pools, and that kind of thing.” Heather enjoyed the fact that her “girls are such strong swimmers, we feel so comfortable when we do go to the beach or something.” Vacations are an important leisure activity for this group of families, and as such, Lauren said having her girls “know how to swim ... is much safer during the vacations.” None of the women explained they wanted their children to learn how to swim in order to compete on teams or be active in the sport of swimming, though they agreed that they would not mind if their children became competitive swimmers.

Rather, their efforts were specifically targeted towards the acquisition of cultural capital, believing, as Lauren remarked, that swimming would be “useful” to her children in the future.

Cultural capital is acquired unconsciously, often through the family, and those who possess it are marked “with an attractive air of distinction” (Erikson, 1991, p. 256), because this capital tends to be recognized as a “legitimate competence” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 245). Bourdieu explains:

Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the *embodied state*, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the *objectified state*, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or the realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematic, etc.; and in the *institutionalized state*, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee. (1986, p. 243)

The most powerful element of cultural capital is transmission, as the process of appropriating cultural capital, and the time necessary for it to take place, depend on the cultural capital embodied in the whole family (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986). I believe pool membership, as an element of the family habitus, is one such way that Valley View members transmit their cultural capital to their children. Additionally, cultural capital is “marked by its earliest conditions of acquisition which, through more or less visible marks they leave ... help to determine its distinctive value” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 245). Cultural capital “is linked to the body” and demonstrates an investment in cultivating the body in a certain way (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244). Accordingly, children from the dominant classes participate in physical cultural pursuits, such as swimming, “which stress manners and deportment and hence facilitate the future acquisition” of various

capitals (Shilling, 1991, p. 656). Exclusive swimming and water sport skills signal the transformation of economic capital into cultural capital, which can in turn be converted into particular forms of both social and physical capital, further contributing to one's sense of distinction (Bourdieu, 1984). For instance, Heather referred to swimming as a lifelong, "good social sport," which her daughters' would benefit from in the future. Therefore children's swimming prowess would allow them to be in situations, be it at Valley View or on an exclusive ocean-side vacation spot, where they would have the opportunity to interact with other "good people," with whom they could meet and enjoy water activities. I believe the Valley View family habitus, supported through parental family tradition, is shaped through an implicit understanding of the cultural value children and families derive from their swimming ability and pool membership. Valley View, as a class-based physical space, facilitates the transformation and conversion of familial capitals, with the goal of reproducing social class privilege in and through children's acquisition of swim skills.

Summer at the Pool? Priceless.: Economic Capital and Valley View Membership

The possession of economic capital buys Valley View family memberships, and thus effectively sponsors children's swimming skills. Economic capital is recognized as a sign of distinction, and refers to financial status, wealth, assets, and the time and money to devote to leisure pursuits (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986). As economic capital increases, so does the "distance from necessity" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 177). Various forms of capital can be derived from economic capital, and therefore it has the ability to transform into different types (including cultural, social, and physical), making it an important part of

the cycle of class reproduction and the family habitus (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986). As previously discussed, 16 of the 20 families interviewed bring in a household income of more than \$177,000 per year, placing them in the top five percent of families in the country (U.S. Census, 2007). Without question, these families' incomes and assets alone locate them among a privileged group of Americans.

Status and lifestyle are linked through consumption choices and practices (Booth & Loy, 1999). Thus, belonging to Valley View is illustrative of upper-middle class privilege and represents the lived reality of member families (Bourdieu, 1978, 1980, 1984). Participation in family recreation experiences in private, exclusive venues is a typical characteristic of upper-income lifestyles (Bourdieu, 1984). Mentioned earlier, Valley View charges \$670 for a summer family membership, and participation on teams costs extra, specifically, \$125 per child, per team, and swimming lessons are privately contracted at a rate of \$30 per 30 minutes. Nevertheless, Lynn commented to me, referencing the popular Mastercard commercial that the title of this section parodies, summer at the pool is "priceless" due to the numerous benefits it offers. Many women shared Lynn's affinity for Valley View as they referred to the pool as a "worthwhile investment," or made comments relating to the idea that the pool is, like Barb said, "an activity that I consider price-wise, a good bang for the buck for the summer." Nancy offered, "It's so accessible ... it's very easy, it's not expensive," and Cathy told me that particularly with respect to her children's other activities, the pool is "really not that expensive," especially because their "cost per swim brings it way down because we are there so much." Even Jessica, who unlike Cathy and most others, confessed in the

middle of July she had only been four times, explained, “I don’t mind it that we don’t go that often because I think that it’s just nice to have to go to if we want to, I mean I don’t mind paying 500 or 600 dollars for that.” It is noteworthy that Jessica does not even know how much she paid to be a 2009 member. Ultimately, the comments made by Jessica and the others speak to the unconscious nature of their privilege as they allude to the fact that almost \$700 is a meaningless deduction, particularly for what they get in return—a private, restricted space, filled with “good people” who occupy the same classed and raced identities, and mutually serve to valorize and reinforce the practices and processes reproducing their social class status.

The mothers also liked the fact that, as Stephanie noted, “you don’t constantly have to be worried about, like once you joined you just go there, you don’t have to be paying every time.” Similarly Faith said, “it doesn’t cost us anymore than the dues we’ve already paid, so it’s a great place for us all to gather.” With these comments many of the women were alluding to venues where they take their children and feel like they constantly have to pay money for some event or service, an additional feature of their consumption-oriented, privileged lifestyle. They appreciate the easy nature of arriving and not having to spend extra money over and above the fees they already paid. Additionally, many mothers indicated that frequent use of the pool actually saved them money because they were not going out and spending in other ways since they were enjoying a lot of time at Valley View. For instance, Lynn said:

It’s also, as a family it’s actually financially—it’s very beneficial, because we’re there instead of someplace else we would be, either spending money that we necessarily [didn’t] need to do, or you know, going [to] the mall we’re not going to, we’re not unnecessarily looking for some item because like that’s how we’re

gonna fill our time. So it's relatively an inexpensive venture because we're not, you know, alternatively going some place and spending the money that we would have if it was like a cold dreary day, and we're home with like five hours to kill. Yeah. So, I think on many aspects, it's you know, it's a worthwhile investment.

Not only does this idea of consumption as a leisure activity reflect these families' perception of their economic capital, but it also echoes Bourdieu's (1984) contention that the dominant classes experience their lives in a culture of privilege characterized by distinguishing consumption habits. I believe the habitus of these Valley View families is delineated, in part, by the aforementioned consumption preferences underlying their membership.

Similarly, many commented favorably about the way that Valley View handled the guest fees. Stephanie felt that "Valley View seemed to have a reasonable fee" which made inviting friends and hosting people at the pool "easier." Along with club dues each year, members have the option to put a certain amount of money on their guest card, and each time they bring a guest, money is deducted from their account. Guests cost three dollars on weekdays and five dollars on weekends. Lauren found it to be "[in]expensive to take your guests to swim." Sabrina specifically commented about the social graces of bringing guests to Valley View:

I keep an account now so nobody's like—you know I make sure I have credit on my guest card, so nobody's fumbling for money, I want it to be, I try to incorporate into my social life. Like my sister came and I'm like let's go to the pool, and I don't want cost to be a factor, like 'oh, the guest fee is this much,'—I sort of think of it as part of my summer entertaining costs, you know what I mean, if you think about it that way? ... And that way you're not fumbling at the desk for money, 'let me pay,' 'no, let me pay,' 'no no no'—I just decided this year, at his stage in our life, if I put 100 bucks on my guest card, big deal.

Not only does Sabrina's comment describe a particular level economic privilege where 100 dollars is virtually meaningless, especially if it can avoid an awkward social situation, but more than that, it speaks to the possession of cultural capital. Dominant classes are defined by the possession and relationship between economic and cultural capital, and the way in which it corresponds to their lifestyle. Sabrina indicates, like all the women do, that fumbling for money is not culturally acceptable, and that guests are the responsibility of the host, so she likes to be prepared rather than entering into the 'fight over the bill,' so to speak. The women's distinctive consumption of this leisure activity, as well as their attitude toward their \$670 pool membership as so easily accessible and worth the investment, demonstrates how this type of private club affiliation is a practice that has become naturalized in their upper-middle class lifestyle, again, due to their "distance from necessity" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 177). Accordingly, as Bourdieu (1978) indicates, participation in private sport communities, such as Valley View, can augment one's social standing and distinguish those maintaining privileged lives.

Interestingly, however, while the women I interviewed felt strongly that their Valley View membership was worth the investment, it was clear that in other areas of their life they experienced financial constraints and had to consider the way in which they allocated their resources, again illustrating their belief in the value of their Valley View membership. These families may have more capital, but it does not mean that they view what they choose to spend their money on as any less important than it is to those with less financial freedom. The demographic statistics for this group are astounding, and at first glance one would not assume they are struggling to get by, yet

they do face challenges living up to their lifestyles. For instance, given the current state of credit and debt in the U.S., and members' salaries versus visible assets, it is possible that these families do not have a large amount of disposable income. While it might seem impossible, people in the same social class demographic as the Valley View families are "barely squeaking by on \$300,000 a year" (Hull, 2009, p. 1). It is likely that these families are paying a sizeable mortgage and property taxes each month in order to own their own home, have car leases to fund, private school tuitions to pay, more than one high-end vacation per year, children's extra-curricular activity fees, college funds, landscapers, babysitters, and housekeepers, all added on to more modest monthly expenses such as groceries, gas, and household bills (cf. Hull, 2009). Though not everyone has the good fortune to afford these luxuries, I believe the family habitus of these 20 families has normalized the need for them, and rather than perceiving them as extravagances or discretionary items, they are viewed as necessities to be covered by their household income. While I did not dig into their bank statements, I got the impression, in some cases, that all these extras may leave little disposable income.

Given this, all of the mothers asserted that if they were going to spend money, they wanted to make sure it was for activities or services that they or their children could benefit from:

I got to a point, where I was like this is not for me, it's for them, like if he's going to be crying off the field, and I'm spending [the money]... (Lynn)

I'm not gonna spend a lot of money on a class that she doesn't like. (Margaret)

Once they make a commitment to something, I make them stick with it. Like you can't ... I'm not going to pay for you to sign up for winter swimming and then not go. Because it's a big pain in the—you have to pay, for swimming in particular,

you have to pay all at once upfront, you know, or you have to make the commitment for the year, you might be able to pay in installments, but you're making a commitment for the year. (Heather)

But you know [the program], day by day is becoming so expensive, so I'm just waiting to see if they really like the sport. (Lauren)

It is clear that the women do care about what they spend money on. Further, I believe their attitudes towards the quality of particular activities is a feature of their upper-middle class family habitus, as they are working hard to make sure that children are put in reputable programs that are worth the investment (Coakley, 2006; Dukes & Coakley, 2002). Additionally, the mothers also appear to have financial constraints and do not want to over extend themselves. Sarah explained:

right now with Elise, we're talking about what is she gonna do, she's gonna keep up ice skating which she's taken a full break from to do swim and dive, is she gonna swim or dive, you know, during the year, is she gonna do art, is she gonna do piano which she has wanted to try, you know, she can't do all that, we can't afford it.

In another example, Elizabeth spoke about what she considered a worthwhile expenditure:

Camp is very expensive. In order to do an affordable camp, you're with a lot of people, and it sounds really snobby of me to say, but some of like the real affordable ones are disgusting. [My husband] did the math, and paying for a babysitter [is] a third of the price [of] going to camp.

Elizabeth, a stay-at-home mother of three, intimated that a "disgusting" camp was dirty, crowded, and unproductive, and in her mind, she believed that if she were to send all of her children to a non-disgusting camp, she would be forced to spend a lot of money. Interestingly, Elizabeth does acknowledge this viewpoint as snobby, indicating that she is aware of her superior attitude. Through her comment, however, it is clear that

though she and her husband do not feel that they have liquid economic capital to spend on their children, they are still exercising a high a level of cultural capital in their choice to keep their kids out of a “disgusting” camp and hire child care instead. It is curious to note that Elizabeth feels her choices are camp or a babysitter, not mom-care, yet she is a stay-at-home mother. Elizabeth’s family also belongs to a local country club, in addition to their membership at Valley View, thereby indicating that it is not necessarily an inability to afford the camp, rather it is about priorities and resource allocation.

Economic capital structures the lives of the Valley View families as they use it to exercise their distinguishing consumption habits and social status. Their daily and family lives are still governed by resource allocation, however, their decisions about how to distribute their wealth represent an additional demonstration of their social class privilege as they use it to buy “contexts to engender the skills they [see] as necessary for success” (Pugh, 2009, p. 211), such as their pool membership. Accordingly, belonging to Valley View is an important consumption choice and a marker of a distinctive lifestyle, and therefore I believe membership is an expression of these families’ habitus.

Country Clubs: The Economic and Cultural Implications

My conversations with this group of 20 mothers regarding belonging to a country club versus a swim and tennis club offered important insights into their financial status, family habitus, and sense of distinction. Many women discussed their family’s inability to afford a country club membership⁶. For instance, Sarah called the possibility

⁶ For reference, country clubs in this area of the country are extraordinarily exclusive and have waiting lists over a decade long. While the clubs do not publish their initiation fees or yearly dues on their websites, according to Valley View members, initiation fees are in the range of \$100,000.

of her family joining one, “financially it’s just completely unrealistic”; Barb said they would join if they “won the lottery”; and Jessica told me the reason that they did not belong to a country club is “because we’re not millionaires ... it’s really expensive.” This indicates that again, while these families overall economic capital is greater than most Americans, many are still deciding how to allocate their resources on a daily basis. And further, their sentiments represent somewhat of a contradiction in their lived experience of privilege, as they consider a country club membership an unattainable luxury, thereby exposing their economic constraints. However, a few women mentioned that they might consider a country club membership, for instance, Tracy, “in lieu of Valley View.” She explained:

we talk about, my husband always talks about joining a country club, because he would like that. He golf’s, and he would like to golf more. He’s always very interested in that. But it is definitely a big outlay of cash to join a country club, when you can golf very inexpensively at say, [local course].

Similarly, Lila remarked, “I would [consider joining a country club]. But I think he—we’re not golfers either, [so its] kinda pricey for just [the pool and tennis].” Cathy specifically revealed:

I would consider it because of the opportunities with the golf and the tennis and for the kids to have the ability to learn to play tennis and golf more. But without offending anybody I’m not sure I’m a club person, I mean it’s not exactly where I want to put my money, and I’m also not sure—the clubs in the [town] area are a little bit different I suspect than clubs in other areas, and while we have lots of friends who belong to clubs, I’m reluctant to put them in the club environment, all the nasty little [gossip]. In fact Michael wants us to join [local country club]—I said when he gets the spare 100 thousand. I have issues with the clubs because of all the additional costs, monthly fees with the food and all of that.

She followed up adding that her kids go to private school “which can lend to some exclusiveness already,” and did not want the country club to further any type of elitist

attitude her children could develop. Cathy's comments illustrate the importance of learning to play country-club sports, such as tennis and golf, for the social, cultural, and physical benefits they can bring participants, as well as the fact that people in her social network belong to exclusive clubs, thus demonstrating her family's lived upper-middle class reality. The women also frequently explained that their husbands were, like Cathy mentioned, "anti-club," or as Lila said of her husband, "he completely hates country clubs, he says it's like the worst," while Margaret said flat out, "my husband doesn't like clubs." The women's comments about their husbands indicate their distinctive feelings towards the membership demographic at Valley View over the upper-crust, elitist attitude they believe exists at area country clubs, rather than the financial constraint it may represent. Like Cathy explained, many families do not think they should be exposing their children to the country club environment. While their remarks could be construed as a coping mechanism for their inability to afford a membership, I argue that their attitudes represent a distinctive sense of confidence about how they want to live their lives and utilize their economic resources, characteristics which define their lived experience, as well as their upper-middle class family habitus. Further, Bourdieu explains that the "bourgeois discretion signals its presence by a sort of ostentatious discretion, sobriety and understatement, a refusal of everything which is 'showy', 'flashy' and pretentious, and which devalues itself by the very intention of distinction" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 249). I believe the laid back, less exclusive atmosphere of Valley View not only suits these families, but also brings them a sense of distinction.

Contrary to the country club setting, Lynn described the benefits of Valley View, explaining, “everything is on the surface, like there’s not really—like you’re not gonna hit that kind of, country club atmosphere. Like it’s no frills, but like you make your own frills.” The fact that Valley View encourages families to shape their own experience and have “good clean fun” (Sabrina), sets it up in opposition to country clubs in which the fun is standard, boring, or prescribed. In many ways, the ability to afford the \$100,000 initiation fee separates the ‘haves’ and the ‘have mores,’ however, for those who can afford it, as I believe the Valley View families can prioritize in such a way that they may be able to, it does mean making the commitment to use the country club for all that it offers. A country club is a year round obligation with monthly restaurant minimums, social obligations, and other membership responsibilities. The Valley View mothers place a great deal of value on the fact that Valley View is only a summer community and they like the fluid nature of their membership and the commitment-less expectation that goes along with it (discussed in greater detail in chapter four). For the most part, these families have no interest in being tied down, and value their freedom and independence, traits bringing them distinction, over and above fitting in to an elite, expensive social setting that they do not have a compelling reason to join.

Alternatively, the Valley View families choose to set themselves apart due to the wide array of diverse cultural experiences they take part in, rather than a singular club membership. The search for distinction steers people “away from everything ‘common’,” and those who are distinguished participate in “places or activities rarest at

a given moment” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 249). For instance, Cathy summed up this idea by describing her and her husband’s view on raising their children:

we have introduced them to the music, we take them out to the theater with some amount of regularity or the symphony so that they can be exposed to it. We also make—it has been a family rule from the beginning and I don’t think they understood what it was ... we go out to dinner, somewhere fairly nice at least once a week so that they appreciate how to behave in that setting and then we try to introduce them to different cuisines and things like that so that they have exposure. I don’t ever want them to be narrow-minded; I want them to accept everything. You don’t have to necessarily have to agree with it, but I don’t want—I worry in this environment that they’re exposed to a lot that could sort of make them a little more insular and less welcoming and it worries me.

Cathy details how she and her husband employ their economic and cultural capital in an effort to cultivate their children’s cultural capital through a wide range of experiences which demonstrate their distinctive, appropriate family and class-based values. Further, Cathy points to the affluence of the surrounding environment turning her children into narrow-minded people, and is actively working to prevent it. However, she describes using the symphony and fancy dinners as a way to mitigate her children’s insulated behavior, cultural activities which are illustrative of a high level of privilege and only serve to reinforce their upper-middle class habitus, rather than educate them on diversity. Many mothers exercise their class-based power and control to shape their children’s lives, as they explain helping their children gain exposure to a variety of diverse experiences with the arts, music, and sports. However this practice speaks to their concerted emphasis on reproducing their own social class privilege, instead of an effort to introduce their children to difference. The Valley View parents seek out opportunities that will offer children the right social experiences, while simultaneously, like Pugh (2009) found, shielding them from “interactional difference” (p. 97). These

techniques of social segregation create social distance between member families and low-income or racialized others, while at the same time reaffirm their own upper-middle class boundaries (Byrne, 2006; Veenstra, 2007).

Furthering this idea, Kristen explained to me that in the summer her daughters are home most of the day with their au pair:

and they've both done some really cool things this summer. They've done, Anna sitting on the piano this summer, she composed a little piece, she like wrote it all out with the notes and like that. I think they've each written some stories, and plays, and done some crafts.

Through their economic capital affording child care, Kristen and her husband are able to offer their children a summer livelihood in which they are completely insulated from social difference. However, to Kristen, and many of the other mothers, the time that her children have to be creative and improve their current skills is crucial to their development and well-being, and the ideas of social segregation or diverse interactions are not acknowledged. Therefore she has engineered a situation which offers her daughters a summer that she believes is a unique, individualized experience, distinctive through its ordinariness (Bourdieu, 1984).

In addition to these more mundane, everyday opportunities to develop their children's sensibilities, the women talked about vacations as enrichment opportunities. For instance, Margaret spoke about the importance of travel and her children being abroad with some frequency to places like Switzerland, England, and Spain. Kelly told me her family skied in the Swiss Alps this past winter, while Faith emphasized her active family vacations to National Parks, and Barb told me about how her family was going swimming with dolphins over the summer. Others simply described relaxing or lavish

vacations such as cruises or tropical spots as important to their family. All of these opportunities, from going out to dinner to skiing the Alps, are illustrative of the Valley View families' unique lived experience of privilege, and I argue their family habitus as well. Ultimately, these distinctive, enriching family activities, including participation at Valley View, function as vehicles of class reproduction as parents spend family time together, transmitting and converting important social and cultural capitals, with the goal of reproducing their social class privilege in and through their children.

The Importance of Family Time

Family time is very significant to these 20 families as it offers parents the opportunity to facilitate the practices and processes involved in class reproduction. However, the idea of family time has received very little academic attention, in fact, "the research is almost nonexistent" (Daly, 1996, p. 216). Daly (1996) explains the concept of family time as a theory of the "socially constructed essence of time" (p. 16), and notes that time spent between family members is important and "has a strong flavor of sentimentality that is rooted in notions of togetherness, intensive interaction, and pride" (p. 66). Many people strive to create this type of family experience because family togetherness can be a source of pleasure and comfort, and represents "the foundation for a stable society" (Daly, 1996, p. 117). Therefore, the investment in family time is made to transmit and reproduce particular family and class-based values in future generations (Bourdieu, 1984; Daly, 1996; DeVault, 2000). Time is valued in our society and the demonstration of free time, particularly to devote to leisure activities, is a marker of social status (Bourdieu, 1984). The fact that Valley View families spend time

(and money) at the pool, as a leisure setting offering both instrumental and intrinsic benefits, illustrates a conscious effort to devote energy towards childrearing, parenting, and family togetherness, with the goal of contributing to the development and maintenance of their distinctive social position (Coakley, 2006; Daly, 1996; Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Middle class lives tend to be characterized by hyper-scheduled, structured activity (Lareau, 2003; Rosenfeld & Wise, 2000), yet these upper-income Valley View families have traded that in favor of a more, as they termed it, “selfish” (Rachel) lifestyle under their control. These women explicitly told me they like to keep their family life calm and make a concerted effort not to over-schedule children in order to leave room for leisure and family time (discussed in greater detail in chapter three). However, their attitude demonstrates their taken for granted sense of family time given the ability to spend time together as an intact family unit is a privilege, not a norm. I believe this distinctive attitude, as well as the practice of spending family time together at the pool, is characteristic of the Valley View members’ family habitus, as well as an expression of their lived reality of upper-middle class privilege.

All of the Valley View mothers indicated that family and family time are very important to them and something that they need to instill in their children. Family time “is highly valued because it is thought to protect the stability and cohesiveness of the conjugal family group” (Shaw, 1992, p. 272). Rachel explained, “it’s all about family” and therefore family time is “the absolute central part of my life.” Elizabeth expressed:

I always want them to be, I always want us to have a strong family, that’s really really important to me ... my fear would be for them, you know, to not be a part of that. You know, not be able to have fun with us, kinda thing.

Like Elizabeth alludes, family time often occurs in fun, active settings. Accordingly, sport and leisure sites, like Valley View, provide contexts for families to spend time together, and further, operate as an additional demonstration of their family habitus as sport, lifestyle, and social class are linked (Bourdieu, 1978, 1984; Coakley, 2006; Kay, 2006a, 2006b; Harrington, 2006; Sabo & Veliz, 2008). All of the mothers indicated that Valley View represents their only organized family affiliation offering built-in family time, however, many explained to me that they participate in additional unstructured, more spontaneous family activities. Kristen, Kelly, Lila, and Tracy mentioned skiing as an important family outing in the wintertime. Kristen also explained, “we enjoy doing things as a family outdoors, I mean we hike, we vacation on a lake in upstate New York, and that’s very water sport-based, water skiing, and swimming, and sailing, and all of that.” Hiking, as Kristen mentioned, is a very popular activity that families do together. Margaret said her family “like[s] to take hiking trips”; Lynn told me that “I mean I we do a lot of like family stuff ... like we go to [hiking spot] or [hiking spot], and like pack the lunch, and make a hike morning, you know things like that”; and Lila explained, “I mean we’ll do stuff as a family, we’ll go for a hike, and go for bike rides and stuff like that, but nothing so structured [as the pool].” Cathy stated:

We do a lot together, you know we really believe we want to spend a lot of time with them. But it’s all, you know we’ll go biking together so it’s not an organized activity, or we’ll go hiking together as a group, and then of course you do all the social things, where you just go to the movies and out to dinner and all that.

Parents also spent time with their kids as a family taking day trips to the city, visiting fun and/or educational places (museums, water parks, etc.), going on vacations, camping, riding bikes, and playing at the park or taking a walk. For instance, Elizabeth noted:

The kids ride their bikes, they're outside all the time, they're on their scooters, their bikes, we walk, they swim, they're just really, they're pretty physically fit, they're always moving outside and things like that, and we do a lot of trekking around and touring [the city] and things like that.

Elizabeth, like all mothers, detailed active pursuits they do as a family. Continuing to keep their children moving was important to the mothers and they emphasized family outings that incorporated physical activity. Participating in leisure pursuits together promotes a "sense of family" and togetherness (Shaw & Dawson, 2001, p. 223). The mothers also detailed activities that one parent does with the kids such coaching youth teams or girl/boy scouts. Sarah explained:

Scouts ... because I'm the leader, and I do both Jenny and Elise's troop. So we do a lot of things, not as a family necessarily, but the girls and I still do a lot of stuff with that, even meetings, we're often all involved in everybody's business. When I do Elise's, Jenny is there with Ashley, and when I do Jenny's, Elise is there with Ashley, you know, and they often participate in whatever activities and stuff and help plan.

This type of interaction is important in order to continue a parental presence and family connection as children's activities can offer a site to "practice family" (DeVault, 2000, p. 501). To these mothers, family time offers an important and rare opportunity to interact, one which helps facilitate the conversion, transmission, and reproduction of their social class privilege in and through their children. Specifically, parents employ their economic capital, in the form of both time and money, in an effort to garner particular opportunities to teach their children valuable cultural and social skills, thereby shaping children's tastes and preferences at a young age. I believe spending time together as a family helps to develop and strengthen the upper-middle class family habitus.

Spending Quality Family Time at Valley View

The development of one's habitus begins during childhood through connections with family and other close social relationships (Bourdieu, 1996; Erikson, 1991). Habitus structures the distribution, transformation, reconversion, and reproduction of capital, and therefore, there is an intergenerational transmission of social class privilege through children who learn their family and class habitus, receive particular forms and volumes of capitals, and develop a taste for certain goods and services (Bourdieu, 1984). I argue that Valley View membership is a constitutive element of the family habitus for member families. The pool offers parents and children a place where they can utilize their economic capital to demonstrate their relative privilege, as well as gain valuable social, cultural, and physical capital that will be useful in other areas of their life. Accordingly, the time that these families spend at Valley View is specifically targeted at reproducing their social class privilege in their children.

Children under age 12 are not allowed at the pool on their own, so there is always a guardian, usually a parent, present with young children which forges an immediate family engagement with Valley View. The majority of the mothers explained that, like Tracy commented, "we could be up there on the frequent user list, that's for sure ... [we go] just about every day." Often mothers spend more time with children than fathers do (Daly, 1996; Shaw, 1992), and consequently, the Valley View women said that they go to the pool with their kids during the week days with only rare appearances from their husbands. Yet on the weekends, most mothers interviewed said their whole family tries to go at least once, if not both days. Sarah and Margaret

indicated that on the weekends they usually send their husbands with the kids one day in order to have time to themselves or do tasks they had not gotten to all week. Barb's husband's work schedule permitted very few free weekends so he was not there very often, and Lauren was the only one who explained that her husband did not like the pool and therefore attends very infrequently. Nevertheless, whether it was mom-care, dad-care, or two-parent care at the pool, all of the women explained that their Valley View membership, and all the time they spent there with any combination of family members, provides an opportunity for a coveted source of family time, because like Reilly mentioned, they believe it "builds a sense of family." This intangible feeling was reiterated by many mothers, for instance Sarah said, "I like that feeling that we're there together as a family, I don't have a good word for it, but we definitely feel like we go together, we play together, we don't just disappear." As such, many women found the pool to be an easy place to spend quality family time because the kids do not fight when they are there and everyone has fun:

[The pool is] a lot of just family good fun. (Margaret)

[The pool is] the best time we can have as a family, [we want] to spend all the time in the swimming pool with the kids. (Linda)

It's a place where everybody can be happy, and I think it's kinda cheesy in some ways, but that's what it is. Everyone is content by going to the pool. It's more important to us to go to do that and spend the time doing that, and so to them it's like a place where we can go, and we can be fun as a family. (Cathy)

[The pool is] like a no frills, family fun, good atmosphere, like it's just, you know, a happy place. (Lynn)

[The pool] becomes a priority and ... it's time to kinda relax and enjoy it, and enjoy being with them. (Tracy)

It is a nice time because I feel like it's the first time of the day really that were all in the same place ... even though I'm not necessarily with Ella I feel I can watch her ... it's like a nice time, just play with Amanda and be able to see Ella and we can all be together. (Lila)

Interestingly, Sabrina, like all the women, explained, "even if I'm not interacting with [the kids] per say ... I consider that family time." Valley View offers a unique environment for families to spend time together or apart, but in the same place. This configuration is not something that anyone has experienced some place else, for instance, Lila explained that it was important to go to the pool because she believed there are not very many places to spend family time. Lila's sentiments are anchored in her upper-middle class sensibilities, assuming that to be spending family time, her family must be *somewhere*, not at home, paying for the privilege of being together.

Comparing it to other activities, she pointed to the pool as:

a nice place where you can all be within reach of each other and you can be diving or swimming laps and you know, all together, as opposed to one of us going for a run, and the other one having to sit back and take care of the kids—you can all kind of do your stuff together.

Lila continued by saying the pool is a nice place for everyone to go and be active together, "as opposed to just watching somebody play a sport ... we can all swim, and take turns being with each other and watching and doing stuff, it's a nice family activity." Sarah illustrated this idea when she mentioned that she believed her daughters would remember their time at Valley View fondly due to the "family aspect" of their membership:

They'll look back and say that was with my family, with my sisters, with my—it will be a different feel, than I did that, and Mom dropped me off, and I did it with this group, and I don't even remember any of their names, you know?

Sarah continued this point with a swim team example:

it's really nice for the girls to be able to cheer each other on. I think putting them in a position where they have to root for each other and you know, be at the same things—this is a very unique opportunity. They both like soccer, but in different leagues and, you know they don't seem to have that opportunity during the year to kind of be together in a competitive way. I think that's gonna be a great bond that they're gonna have for a really long time. I mean to share an activity that intensely with so much fun that exists around it—I think will be something that they'll talk about for a long long time.

Sarah believed, like the other women, that Valley View offers a different space for sibling relationships as all three of her children, with different ages and swimming abilities, often play together, and therefore explained that the pool “feels very much like our family little vacation.” Rachel reiterated Sarah's sentiments and explained, “if there's no one there than the two of them will play together, you know, they kind of have the built in family time because Gary will play with [Sasha].” Adding credibility to the mothers' observations about their children, all of the kids told me one of their favorite things about the pool was that they got to play with some family member, and many of them listed their siblings as being very fun at the pool. This closeness and bonding is important to a sense of family time and family togetherness. Paige even told me that the pool “gives us a little bit of family time,” and then continued to explain to me how her family is at the pool, each of them doing different things, but “then it's just like we're all together there.” Overall family leisure time is a vehicle that encourages positive interaction between all family members (Shaw & Dawson, 2001). There is a concerted effort on the part of the mothers to make this a nice time for their children so they grow up with fond memories of being together at Valley View. This includes

organizing family events such as dinner at the pool or a late night swim, activities which the mothers report arranging.

Women's time with their family in leisure situations is important to who they are as mothers, and while many do not consider it personal leisure time, they tend to both value and enjoy family activities (Shaw, 1992). Interestingly, all of the mothers told me they would not choose to go to the pool on their own if they did have free time, yet because they found it to be such a powerful source of family time in their lives, they believed it was important to attend with their children and enjoyed their time together.

For example, Cathy revealed:

I will admit there is many a discussion in the family as to what we're going to do as a family, and they want to go to the pool, and we're like, 'how about we go hiking'—or [they say] 'how about we go there?' So we spend everyday, a portion of our time there, and it's good quality time so I can't really complain about it.

Cathy told me that since Valley View makes her family happy, it makes her happy. She recognized the pool as being a unique place for her family:

I just think it's a, it's kind of a nice little escape from the rest of the world. You go, it's its own little community, it's its own little life, it's its own little activity and you can sort of forget a lot of the other problems in the world. And I think that's sort of how I would view it, and that's sort of an extension of the family.

Viewing the pool as an extension of family is a reason why all of the mothers feel their membership is so crucial. Heather told me, "I feel like [Valley View] is a huge part of who we are as a family every summer." Sabrina noted that in the summer "you see the family more than sort of just the mom, I mean you see all the moms, but you know, you see all the dads too, or you see all the siblings." As Sabrina mentioned, the idea of being able to see people's "whole family often" was important. For Heather, this family

identity was significant because similar to the majority of the other mothers interviewed, her husband works long hours and is not around much during the rest of the year, “but during the summer, everybody knows Gary, everybody knows who he is. He’s always there. So for us, it’s definitely a family connecting time that we don’t have any other time of the year.” Heather went on to say:

we all know the same people, or complain about the same things or share stories. Like ‘oh my God, did you see this?’ Or you know, you see something and then there’s sort of clarification because somebody else saw it from a different perspective. So you have conversations like that as a family that we don’t have any other time of the year.

The idea of having time together, mutual acquaintances, and common experiences at Valley View is what the mothers draw on to illustrate family time at the pool. Cathy confessed that recently she was going to stay home to get some things done at the house but then “[my husband] looked at me and said, ‘could you please go to the pool with us because I’d like to see you.’ So it was our opportunity to sit and get caught up.” Similarly, Rachel explained that her family is “very much about being together as a unit all the time ... [and] we always come together at the pool,” thus revealing that the pool provides an important site for family togetherness. Comments and examples such as these indicate a committed family unit, and reinforce others sense of family at the pool.

Overall, through their emphasis on the pool as family time, it is clear that parents use Valley View as a site to “practice family” as they are able to demonstrate particular behaviors and practices, and transfer certain values and skills to children (DeVault, 2000, p. 501). The mothers report that their children are better behaved at the pool, have their own social network, a bit of autonomy, and all around enjoy their time, and thus,

Valley View does create an atmosphere for families to be together and apart, but in the same place doing, acting as, and being a family. This inherent family aspect of Valley View offers a distinct family-oriented community which is both reinforced and reproduced through all members. Having one or both parents present at the pool, actively encouraging this sense of family time, allows Valley View to become a significant component of the family habitus, as well as a physical space contributing to the transmission, conversion, and reproduction of social class status. However this lived Valley View reality, as described by the mothers, does not acknowledge the regimes of power and privilege structuring their familial experience. Not only do they fail to recognize that their social class standing positions them securely within an elite group of Americans, but further, they are complicit in the continued operation of the exclusive, socially segregated enclave that is Valley View.

Family Socialization: Securing Social Capital

Given this distinct sense of family time at Valley View, there is a large component of family socialization inherent with being at the pool. Leisure pursuits that take place at exclusive places require a certain level of social capital in order to participate, and in turn, participation can yield social capital (Bourdieu, 1978, 1984; Shilling, 1991). According to Bourdieu:

Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit in the various senses of the word. (1986, p. 248-9)

Bourdieu explains that social capital has a “multiplier effect” on one’s collective capital (1986, p. 249), and it demonstrates the “successful management” of all capital possessed (1996, p. 24). He also indicates that to reproduce social capital, those who have it must engage in a “continuous series of exchanges” in order to maintain and increase this capital (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 250). Valley View, as an exclusive recreational club, demonstrates a “highly controlled social exchange,” and provides members with an opportunity to conserve and augment their social capital. Accordingly, the social experience families’ gain through their membership is a targeted, directed choice on the part of the parents as they have engineered the pool into their family lives for particular reasons. Further, club membership offers families and children a chance “to engage in socially elite sporting activities which stress manners and deportment and hence facilitate the future acquisition of social and cultural capital” (Shilling, 1991, p. 656). Thus, Valley View serves as a network that converts and transmits capital in and through children with the express purpose of reproducing their social class privilege.

Forming a “Good Circle of Friends”: Socially Segregated Lives at Valley View

The women praise the pool for the opportunity it offers them to cultivate social capital in their children. For instance, Faith referred to Valley View as “a welcoming, kind of social center for our family ... [that] we all look forward to every year ... it’s sort of what we do in the summer, it’s a place we go.” Faith continued by explaining they know more people every year and it is a great place to come back to each summer.

Tracy felt that the pool:

really defines our summer [because] summer starts for us when Valley View opens, all of a sudden its physical activity for the whole family, its social activity

for the whole family, its unplanned playdates for the whole family, I mean honestly I go there, and everybody has a friend or makes a friend, you know all five of us. So we can go there at any time and have people to hangout with and swim with, and that's really important and it makes our lives a lot easier.

Similarly, Stephanie commented that in the summer "[the pool] is a big social component for us." Nancy said that she enjoys the pool for "the social part—that you sit down and you can talk and meet new people and new families." Elizabeth observed that being at Valley View is "an easy way to facilitate friendships because you are focused on having fun, you're not thinking about it too much, and you can make friends effortlessly." Many mothers explained that the pool occupied a certain place in their family's social life in the summer as it was an easy place to bring guests. Linda mentioned that her family "use[s] it for a bit of socialization. If someone comes to our house, we always say, 'oh okay, let's spend the time at the pool.'" Likewise, Lauren said:

we had friends visiting us, let's see the last two weeks we had friends over ... [and] we went to play tennis together, and then I took them as guests to the swimming pool. It's a nice—it adds an extra dimension to activities when people are from out of town, especially in the summer, [and] everybody appreciates it.

Lauren also explained that the pool becomes social because people can meet and eat dinner there or schedule social activities. Rachel told me that she periodically organizes Friday night dinners with both Valley View and non-Valley View friends during the summer, and Kelly, along with many others, said she looks forward to weekend nights, grilling and swimming at the pool with her husband and daughters. Similarly, Lila explained:

on the weekends we'll definitely talk to people and see what time they're gonna be there. And then we'll go no matter what, but we'll definitely try to meet up with people there, and you know sometimes if we're all going to be there later in the day ... we'll organize and order food and that kind of thing on the weekends.

Meeting up and organizing social events at the pool is convenient, mainly because the pool is a family space that provides a built-in socializing opportunity for both adults and kids. However, again, the pool provides a class-based social experience for families, and operates as a socially segregated physical space for member families only. Through participation in social activities at the pool, families are able to maintain social distance, or class boundaries, from others as they exercise an element of choice over their social contact and affiliations. And further, families are able to facilitate the preservation and transmission of white, upper-middle class social capital without the threat of diverse others (Byrne, 2006; Pugh, 2009). I believe this experience is symbolic of the upper-middle class lived culture of privilege, and thus emblematic of their family habitus.

Further, illustrating this idea of exclusive, class-based socialization, Faith explained that she viewed this unique parent-child inclusive environment as an excellent opportunity to be a social role model for her children:

we're socializing and you know, I think another thing, they're socializing with each other, I get to socialize, and they're watching me socialize too, and I think it's an interesting—you know I often model for my kids, I think because I have these [different] groups of friends so I'm navigating groups of friends ... I think it's an opportunity for them to see, because they typically are not seeing me socialize with my friends during the school year, because [we're] busy—I mean they might see us when we're at activities and I'm chit-chatting with a friend or something, but they're not seeing me kind of move among friends as they do at the pool ... they see me kind of moving among, and being nice to everybody, and kind of talking to someone and then moving on to another person, and watching that, and I often will say, 'do you see how I talked to this friend, and how I include this friend?' So it's a place for them to sort of see me role model that as well.

Faith believed the ability to socialize as a very big part of life and a skill that is imperative to her children's success—one which it is not only her job to teach, but also to model.

Leisure sites, such as Valley View, offer parents the opportunity demonstrate behaviors, practices, family values, and life skills for children, rather than instruct or lecture them about proper behavior (Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Faith's identification of Valley View as an appropriate physical space to cultivate these skills in her children is an example of the way in which parents use the pool as a vehicle to transmit and reproduce their social skills, thereby contributing to the reproduction of their class-based privilege. Further, I believe that the maternal drive to take advantage of these social learning opportunities illustrates an additional component of their family habitus. Sabrina similarly mentioned:

I think my kids learn to be social and kind and they interact well with other kids and with other adults, you know, it just I think makes them happier individuals, and makes their way better in the world. People like you better if you're social, if you know how to look somebody in the eye.

The idea of looking somebody in the eye speaks to a specific social capital that is beneficial in many aspects of life, and Sabrina's mention of this characteristic refers to it as an embodied disposition expressive of social class position. As a way to ensure the transmission and reproduction of privilege in the next generation, parents attempt to instill corporeal habits in their children, as even subtle gestures, postures, and language can demonstrate social meaning and cultural values, and accordingly, "shape the class body" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 190; see also 1977). The manner in which an individual relates to their own body is expressed in particular ways, for instance, bodily comportment and outward displays of confidence express very "visible traces of early and recurrent exposure" to a particular distinctive class experience, and are "powerful social marker[s]" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 252). Confidence, and the effort to nurture confidence through social interactions with other pool members, is a privilege of the

privileged, and again, demonstrates the transmission of valuable social capital (and cultural capital, discussed in greater detail in chapter three) to children. As such, the mothers believe that Valley View offers a distinct social learning opportunity for their children, and therefore I argue that pool participation helps to reproduce their embodied upper-middle class family habitus.

The pool also represents an important chance for children to socialize with each other. Lynn, among others, told me:

I think the boys see it as social fun, you know otherwise they wouldn't want to go as much, and they love the pool, they love the activity of playing in the water, and being there, and things that you would think would be more of a frustration—like I mind adult swim more than they mind it, but they go to the tennis court or play basketball, or they're playing ping pong, I mean it's just four hours of social activity for them. Yeah, I mean it's not a chore, they're ready they go ... I think they just love being outside, they love the pool, they love that they get [that]. It's like an open playdate with numerous people, so it's a win win for them.

Cathy explained that her son “is such a huge social animal [and] he goes and he likes to be around all the kids.” Stephanie commented that the pool allows her kids to have a unique opportunity to socialize:

It's kind of cute, we saw them on Monday and the boys were playing together, so that's been nice. And Ken actually, he's pretty good, I think one of his strong points is he's pretty good at trying to go talk to other kids, and so I actually think it's kind of neat for him not knowing a lot of kids, I'm sort of curious to see if he will—that's another reason I do want to go more ... I think even Zoe, she tends to be shy, at least definitely compared to Ken, even she said that she was talking to a few kids.

On the whole, many of the mothers feel, like Elizabeth noted, that the friendships made through swimming are unique and “could carry on your whole life, and it's something you can't find just by hanging out.” Through her comments, Elizabeth spoke to the

distinctive, unique social opportunity that Valley View offers her family. Many explained, like Sarah said, “for my kids, they now have friends, instead of me having friends and trying to make friends for them, you know, they find their people.” However, Sarah, like the other mothers, knows that “their people” are “good people,” or other white, upper-middle class children from Valley View families who share the same habitus. In many ways making friends at the pool, for both adults and children, is simply a controlled opportunity to meet other “good people,” an exercise which both reinforces and valorizes their socially segregated lives, and protects children from interacting with diverse others. Illustrating this idea, Rachel explained, “I want them to be social people and have a good circle of friends, I want them to be very socialized and know people and be comfortable, especially because he’s a little shy, and that’s ... why we do a lot more social things.” Rachel indicates that she is utilizing the pool as a distinctive social opportunity to help her children form a “good circle of friends,” and improve their social confidence, traits that she believes are crucial to the maintenance of their familial social status and children’s future success. Socialization is important for both upper-middle class parents and children, and Valley View is a valuable place to acquire social capital and techniques of sociability. Accordingly, I believe the parental effort to cultivate these abilities is representative of the transmission of social class privilege in and through children, as well as a dimension of their family habitus.

Developing a Social Network

Clearly the socializing opportunities that families have at Valley View are both important and numerous, and like Ostrander (1984) discovered, club memberships are

critical to the preservation of upper-income social networks for reasons over and above leisure and enjoyment. For instance, as discussed above, they help maintain exclusive class-based social circles. In addition to simply being social, membership at Valley View facilitates an additional social network for families. Social networks are not a given, rather they are the product of the concerted effort of families to (re)produce “lasting, useful relationships that can secure material or symbolic profits” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249). As such, many of the mothers explained how their membership to Valley View was a concerted choice made for particular reasons, namely, as a place to “connect” with others who share their habitus. For instance, Elizabeth told me the purpose of Valley View in her family life was for:

exercise, leisure, and social network, I would definitely say. You know a way to connect with the neighbors and a way to connect with people outside the school because there is no one at the pool that goes to any of the schools that we belong to.

Yet, the goal of both socializing and forming a social network at Valley View is not about bonding or building lifelong friendships, rather, it is about the practice and process of social networking. These upper-middle class families have already achieved the social status they want, and therefore engaging in a “continuous series of exchanges” is a technique designed to maintain their social capital (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 250). Specifically, pool membership, as a concerted choice, offers an opportunity to form a useful social network that increases the strength and number of social relationships a family possesses. As an example, Sabrina believed:

I mean it increases your social connections, not in social climbing ways, it’s just more people, you know? You know if you want to start a business, you know it

just widens your social circle I guess, we don't—is that something we need? No. We're not selling something.

Many of the mother's discussed these social connections, not with an emphasis on social climbing, but rather as a way of broadening their network. Sabrina also told me:

I met somebody whose husband did similar work as my husband, so I met the husband and I'm chatting with him one day, so the next time [my husband] came, I introduced them, two hours, yak yak yak, so it's social, you know? In terms of like 'oh, let's go out Saturday night,' not so much yet, but it is, it's fostering some friendships.

Cathy illustrated this idea of expanding her social network using the example of another Valley View family:

Like the Smith's, we met, now we haven't socialized with them, but then when you run into them out and about, maybe at the grocery store, you stop and have quite a long conversation, you know? So you do develop some relationships—we haven't taken them to the level of socializing with the folks outside of the pool, but it's a nice opportunity to socialize there.

Ultimately the Valley View social network presents members with a different set of potentially useful social connections. Fellow members are not specifically viewed as friends, rather as affiliations that may be called upon at some point in the future when circumstances change, for instance if there is a job or sales opportunity.

Additionally, the idea of forming a thriving social network in all aspects of life is very important to these mothers for a variety of reasons, one of which is because it can help them figure out what they *should* be doing, particularly as far as their children are concerned. For example, Faith explained that in order to enroll her daughters in specific programs she and her friends “all kind of consult with each other and figure [it] out. And not everybody does the same thing, but we all kind of find out if it's a good place or

not, and that type of [thing].” Similarly Kelly offered an example about how she finds out about things through “word of mouth”:

when Ingrid was interested in the violin, a friend of ours takes the violin so I talked to her mom, and then, you know, it’s just through friends, you know we have a violin store near us, so you get to know [the town] and get to know what resources are offered and then you do your research from there.

Overall, the Valley View families, and the mothers in particular, use their social network to facilitate their daily lives. Establishing and utilizing these connections characterizes the lived experience of these upper-middle class families. Social capital demonstrates the “successful management of the capital collectively possessed by members of the domestic unity” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 24), and serves to multiply other forms of capital, giving those who possess it distinctive privileges (Bourdieu, 1986). Pool membership, afforded through economic capital, and desired due to cultural capital, offers families an additional opportunity to build social capital and expand their social circle through relationships with other members. However, as discussed earlier, these relationships are with other “good people” who belong to the pool and occupy the same habitus. These alliances serve to reinforce and reproduce members’ socially segregated lives through the co-production and transmission of a specific form of white, upper-middle class social capital in and through each other.

Producing “Good People” and “Building a Happy Childhood”

As established thus far in this chapter, according to the mothers, these 20 families have placed an explicit emphasis on family time and family life. Membership at Valley View is a concerted choice for them, illustrative of their family habitus, as their economic capital has facilitated an opportunity for them to gain valuable cultural and

social capital, as well as an exclusive physical space in which they can transmit their particular distinctive lifestyle sensibilities to their children. As such, the women speak very fondly of what participation at the pool can do for their family. Faith explained many of her goals for her children “are focused on [and] enhanced at the pool,” and Tracy believed, “Valley View definitely plays into what our aspirations are for [the kids].” Specifically, Tracy felt that “being there is teaching them so much about themselves and what they can do, and how to be good people.” Cathy told me that being at Valley View offers her children “an opportunity to develop into being very good people ... [and] I think that’s part of why everybody looks forward to it every summer, because it supplements and enforces our value system, so it works out well.” Similarly, many of the mothers expressed a goal for their children to be “good people”:

To make them healthy, independent, smart, educated, good people, with high family values. (Linda)

I think that’s mostly what we think about, just having them be good people. (Sarah)

Fundamentally, we want to raise two young men who are good people. (Cathy)

[To] be good citizens, be good friends, and be just nice people. (Stephanie)

We expect you know, that you show others that you are good people, and you make good choices. (Lynn)

That they make the right friends, and not getting involved in the wrong things, and being smart about the choices they make. (Heather)

These goals are nothing if not consistent, as all of the mothers explained that part of their motivation to join Valley View, discussed in the first section of this chapter, was a desire to be around “good solid people.” There is a clear link between being at Valley

View, understood by these families as an upper-middle class, socially segregated place that contains “good people,” to producing “good people.” I believe the collective Valley View vision of what “good people” are comes from a shared, albeit unconscious, class-based family habitus, marked by families’ who employ their various forms and levels of capital in order to garner membership to the pool, a bounded, socially segregated space operating to reproduce and reinforce white, privileged “good people.”

The process of Valley View producing “good people” works in a variety of ways, for example, as previously discussed, parents instill particular cultural and social values in their children through familial participation at the pool. In addition, one of the consistent ideas that the women expressed involved Valley View and the process of memory making, as they have a strong desire to facilitate happy summer memories for their kids. My interviews with the children demonstrated that this had in fact happened as they all speak fondly about the pool, report thinking about it during the winter, and are excited for it to open in the summer. The idea of the pool as, like Kelly labeled it, “a summer memory,” is important because if children remember their experiences fondly, then parents will have successfully transmitted their culturally valued tastes and preferences for pool membership, and thus their social class privilege. The mothers believe that forming strong memories of an active, happy, healthy, safe place is beneficial for their children. Sabrina expressed this sentiment in telling me that, “the pool’s a happy place, summer’s a happy time, so I think if memories of growing up at a pool can help enhance their lives, you know, their outlook on life, and their well-being, then that would be great.” Like Sabrina, the mothers felt that Valley View is a nice part

of their kids' childhood and as such, having it be a constant presence in their family lives over time is an important motivation for their membership. For instance, Kristen said to me:

And right from the start, that very first summer we joined, and every summer, whatever phase of life the kids are at, we have used the pool, you know, starting with the kiddie pool and swim lessons, and swim team and dive team, you know, we've just—Valley View has grown with us as our family has matured.

The mothers believe that this intangible Valley View experience, like Reilly revealed, is “building a happy childhood.” Parents feel that a happy childhood facilitates a well-adjusted adulthood, and therefore the pool becomes an important part of shaping who these children will become as they get older. For example, Lynn believed that:

[The pool] will be part of the boys' development, their history. When they look back, when they're 15 or 16, of all the summers they've spent at Valley View, and they've been there since swimmy diapers ... it will be truly part of their growing up experience.

This comment illustrates how families employ Valley View in their children's lives as a consistent experience throughout their childhood. Similarly, Heather explained her view:

you grow up at a place, and at first, you know, you idolize the coaches and you idolize the [life]guards, and then someday you get to be one of them. I mean that's one of the things that I love about [it] and that's why I feel so strongly about making this continue, because I think it's a great experience for kids.

Heather speaks to Valley View offering her children a chance to take on responsibility as they mature in a place they have grown up at. Likewise, Kristen confessed:

I'm looking forward in the not very distant future to them having an opportunity to start teaching others and be the more senior element. And you know if they want to they can [life]guard, it can be a summer job for them if they want. You know I think there's a whole end of the spectrum that we haven't hit yet, that I think Valley View can provide in terms of teaching responsibility.

Many mothers told me their children had expressed an interest in becoming a lifeguard when they were old enough, and they attribute this to the positive, productive experience their kids are having at Valley View. The fact that these young kids think the lifeguards are cool and they aspire to be like them makes parents happy, because after all, they see Valley View as a *safe place* with *good people* and accordingly, this is the *right goal* for children to have as part of their *happy childhood*.

In conclusion, I have argued that the pool provides the Valley View families with a powerful, consistent source of family time, and thus their membership is emblematic of their lived experience of privilege. The parents boast a family tradition of swimming participation, and therefore equate swimming ability with their own moral capital and a set of “life skills” their children must acquire. Specifically, members have invested their economic capital in order to facilitate their consumption of Valley View, a context they believe aids in the conversion and transmission of cultural and social capital in and through their children, with the express purpose of producing “good people.” Accordingly, these upper-middle class families participate in Valley View, and other family-oriented activities, due to their desire to reproduce their privilege through the status project that is their children. However, in reality, the exclusive social context of the pool functions as a site of social segregation that maintains class-based boundaries through the shared dispositions, beliefs, and values held by the members. Therefore, I assert that pool membership both reinforces and valorizes members’ mutual upper-middle class status, and thus operates as a constitutive feature the family habitus.

Chapter III: Cultivating Cultural Capital:

The Enriching Experiences Shaping Upper-Middle Class Childhood

The lived reality of privilege experienced by the Valley View families is mutually constituted by their place in the upper-middle class cultural field, a social space characterized by their “distance from necessity” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 177). Fields, or fields of cultural production as Bourdieu labels them, are the “social space of objective relationships,” or fluid contexts where individuals and their social positions interact (Bourdieu, 1985a, p. 16). They are networks, systems of relations, or “relational configurations” (Wacquant, 1989, p. 36) that structure social positions of power within which agents attempt to “safeguard or improve their position” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 101). Accordingly, the cultural field facilitates the production of one’s habitus as it is “‘at home’ in the field it inhabits” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 128; see also Bourdieu, 1984). The connection between field and habitus is important as all social practices and representations occur only based on this relation (Wacquant, 1989).

Bourdieu links the dimensions of field and habitus to capital, describing an “ontological correspondence” that exists between these structuring structures (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 127). Agents are awarded their place in the field based on three dimensions of capital, economic, cultural, and social, which are distributed in a particular way within social space:

in the first dimension according to the global *volume* of capital they possess, in the second dimension according to the *composition* of their capital, that is, according to the relative weight in their overall capital of the various forms of capital especially economic and cultural, and in the third dimension according to

the evolution in time of the volume and composition of their capital, that is, according to their *trajectory* in social space. (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 4)

The distribution of various forms of capital becomes “effective” when agents recognize its meaning and consequently define the structure of the field (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247). Dominant classes possess large amounts of capital and “a freedom with respect to that capital” giving them the “power over necessity” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 256). Capital exists in three forms, embodied, objectified, and institutionalized, and cultural capital, the main focus of this chapter, “is linked to the body and presupposes embodiment” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244). In its embodied form, cultural capital speaks to bodily dispositions, as well as the consumption of a variety of formative personal experiences that become naturalized as “legitimate competenc[ies],” and thus can demonstrate social class privilege (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 245). The transmission of cultural capital receives the greatest weight in reproduction strategies as it is “no doubt the best hidden form of hereditary transmission of capital” (Bourdieu, 1986, p.246). Additionally, this capital is passed on in and through the family “quite unconsciously” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 245), and is important as it “is the most natural and hence the most convincing kind of signal to others” regarding social class position (Erikson, 1991, p. 256). The possession of this capital “implies a labor of inculcation and assimilation,” and is linked with economic capital as it requires an investment of time, often afforded through financial stability, on the part of the mother, in order to ensure successful conversion and transmission (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244).

The appropriation of embodied behaviors and cultural products are linked to cultural capital, and therefore the acquisition of various types of cultural capital can

“yield profit in distinction” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 228). Distinction “is the difference inscribed in the very structure of the social space when perceived through categories adapted to that structure” (Bourdieu, 1985a, p. 731). Bourdieu (1984) argues:

[The] illusion of ‘natural distinction’ is ultimately based on the power of the dominant to impose, by their very existence, a definition of excellence which, being nothing other than their own way of existing, is bound to appear simultaneously as distinctive and different, and therefore both arbitrary (since it is one among others) and perfectly necessary, absolute and natural. (p. 255)

This arbitrary, unconscious power is structured by the dominant class’s possession of economic and cultural capital, and the way in which it is mediated through their habitus and corresponds to their lifestyle (Bourdieu, 1984). Cultural capital “marks a person with an attractive air of distinction,” and is often characteristic of a well-educated, capable person with distinctive tastes and preferences (Erikson, 1991, p. 256). Tastes are “distinctive features,” interpreted as the “expression of a particular class of conditions of existence i.e., as a distinctive life-style, by anyone who possesses a practical knowledge of the relationships between distinctive signs and positions in the distributions” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 175). Accordingly, it is necessary to map the social field in order to understand how lifestyle practices and behaviors are indicative of cultural capital, and thus awarded distinction, as the very logic of the field itself is based on distinction (Bourdieu, 1984; Harvey & Sparks, 1991).

Previous chapters have more generally discussed the familial practices and processes leading to the preservation and reproduction of social class privilege. This chapter will specifically detail how the Valley View families can be characterized by their “power over necessity” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 256), and the manner in which they exercise

their cultural tastes and preferences, or cultural capital, in order to garner distinction in their social field. The following delineates how the Valley View mothers lived experience of privilege influences their management and control over their family's distinctive lifestyles, and further, the way they invoke their class-based power to provide their children with the requisite activities that will shape them into "well-balanced" (Heather) individuals. It is imperative to discover the "individually insignificant but cumulatively important ways in which parents from the dominant classes actually facilitate their children's progress through key social settings" (Lareau, 2003, p. 278). Accordingly, in this chapter I argue that the mothers offer their children enriching experiences in an effort to engender particular upper-middle class embodied dispositions, or various cultural capitals, that are designed to "maintain or improve their position in social space" (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 258). As discussed, during the summer, Valley View, as a cultural field, functions as a very important feature of the upper-middle class habitus, offering families a physical space to facilitate the transmission, conversion, and reproduction of social class privilege in and through their children. Appropriately, in the second part of this chapter I detail the way the mothers have engineered Valley View into their family lives because of the unique opportunity it provides to cultivate children's cultural capital through enriching, intangible pool experiences. Specifically, I argue that the pool offers a distinctive, socially segregated, upper-middle class physical space for children to engage in an unstructured, yet controlled activity which builds their self-confidence, and consequently helps to reproduce their social class privilege.

“Just Because You Like to Kick a Soccer Ball Around, Do You Have to Play Soccer?”:

Examining Class-based Maternal Preferences for Children’s Activities

Children’s activities are a very important part of upper-middle class life as they help to create a well-rounded childhood that will be advantageous in achieving success in later life (Coakley, 2004, 2006; Messner, 2009). In fact, children’s participation in extracurricular pursuits is often perceived as a marker of parental moral worth, and consequently “not providing one’s offspring with the requisite experiences ... is both an expression of suburban failure, and tantamount to an admission of child neglect” (Andrews, 1999, p.48; see also Coakley, 2006). Accordingly, many parents, including these 20 Valley View mothers, employ their various capitals in an attempt to cultivate and control their children’s development by managing their time and activities (cf. Arendell, 2000; Coakley, 2004; 2006; Messner, 2009; Rosenfeld & Wise, 2000). However, these women are quite concerned with how their children’s schedules mesh with their family life, and vocalized their dislike for the over-programmed, hurried, and frenetic nature of modern American family lives which are often over-run with activities. This attitude marks an immediate distinction between the lived reality of the upper-middle class cultural field, and that of the social climbing middle class who rely on their children’s activities and successes to promote their family status. Middle class parents often have each child participating in up to eight activities during the year (Arendell, 2000), and are consequently “drowning in carpools and crowded calendars, trapped by high expectations and ever-escalating standards” (Rosenfeld & Wise, 2000, p. 203). Illustrating this distinctive difference, many Valley View mothers explained to me that

they knew other people (not at Valley View) who were always on the go, and that was not the lifestyle they wanted, nor had created for their family. For example, Heather offered:

I know other parents ... like what's wrong with them ... people who are overwhelmed by their kids' schedules, they can't get it together, they feel just really overwhelmed. I don't feel that way ... If I can't make it happen I say no, if I can, we do it.

Similarly, Reilly explained, "I know a lot of other families are [going to] this practice, that practice, on a Saturday, and for us, it doesn't really work." She continued to tell me, "I just want to slow down with them and not have them involved in 10 million things because I don't know, it's just not necessary." Kelly, like all of the mothers, repeated a phrase I heard often, "I try not to over-schedule everybody." Furthering this idea, Sabrina explained that she believed her kids should try lots of things, however, they did not need to be over-programmed and in the structured activity version of whatever they were interested in:

try things you don't get to try ... [but] just because Gavin likes to draw, does he have to take an art class, do I have to sign him up for an art class? Just because you like to kick a soccer ball around, do you have to play soccer? Again, if you ask him, 'do you wanna?'—that's great, okay—but do you just have to like suck 'em into anything? Gavin jumped off the diving board ... I'm like, he jumped off the diving board, he just jumped off the diving board for the first time, does he have to do dive team, you know?

I argue that these women's attitudes are indicative of their upper-middle class privilege. Middle class parents tend to be hyper-scheduled and sacrifice personal time and leisure in order to make sure that their children are participating in structured, organized activities, namely youth sports, in an attempt to improve their social position and offer their children a better future (Coakley, 2004, 2006; Lareau, 2003; Messner, 2009;

Rosenfeld & Wise, 2000; Swanson, 2009b). However, these upper-income Valley View mothers have traded that in favor of a more, as they termed it, “selfish” (Rachel) lifestyle under their control. This distinctive attitude describes an additional contrast between middle and upper-middle class lives, and is expressive of the upper-middle class habitus of the Valley View families. Further, these sentiments are characterized by these women’s “distance from necessity” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 177), as their relative power and privilege allows them the freedom and control to structure their family lifestyles in the way they feel is appropriate. Collectively, the Valley View mothers feel “justified in being (what one is)” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 228), and thus confidently resist the idea of over-scheduling their families in favor of keeping a sane, balanced feel to everyday life and positioning family time as central.

While this family-oriented attitude was pervasive across all 20 families, many women noted this outlook was difficult to maintain. Stephanie told me that she believes her family life, like all of the mothers, is driven by her children’s activities, yet she explained, “you don’t want [the kids] over-scheduled, and I don’t know what it is, [in] this area you get caught up in just doing things constantly.” Stephanie referenced the “very high achieving” town they lived in, while Kelly referred to it as “a very highly competitive area.” Kelly continued to tell me that parents in her daughter’s school believe that it is not enough for kids to be on grade level, instead they had to be two or three grade levels ahead of their age, yet she, like the other Valley View mothers, avoids this hyper-focus on high achievement telling me, “I just think that’s ridiculous.” Because of these concerns, and their emphasis on resisting over-scheduling, these mothers work

hard to maintain a central focus on family time amidst busy schedules. For example, Sarah explained her outlook:

Some of it is balancing time ... and you know they're both in different places, and you know I don't like to have too much of that, one, because Ashley ends up riding around in the car which is no good for her, but two, because we don't have family time and we are used to having dinner together, we're used to having activity time outside playing, you know to get our house together, and they really do miss that if I get too crazy.

The idea of having dinner together as a family was important and mentioned by many of the mothers. "Simple rituals," such as family dinners, "serve to keep the life plans of individual family members in lockstep with one another," and is one way to preserve a sense of family and control time (Daly, 1996, p. 125). The practice of maintaining something as easy as family dinnertime is emblematic of the Valley View families' lived experience of privilege, as they perceive this time to be more important than time spent by individual children in activities. For example, Reilly did not like to schedule anything on the weekends as she considered that family time. And Kelly believed that family life was important as well, and revealed that she refused to schedule her kids in the evenings, rather they participated in extra-curricular activities immediately after school or not at all. She continued to explain:

I do put limits on how many activities they can do. I think the soccer this spring was the first time we've done that, and that added a lot of time spent doing activities and that kind of thing. I mean it's family life, and so the activities are important, but I try to limit it so we aren't constantly running from place to place and thing to thing.

Further, all the mothers discussed, like Sabrina, "I'm not a big activity person ... I try to make sure they each have one activity going on at a time, generally not more than one,"

or Jessica who mentioned her kids do “one thing ... a season,” or Rachel who said “I definitely try to keep them to one to two activities a season.” Similarly, Barb explained:

some people overdo their kids, they have something to do every day of the week, I think school’s hard, and I think that we want to do extra work with them, school-wise, so I think they’re only gonna have one activity per child during the school year, at a time.

The mother’s contention that their kids only participate in one activity per season is illustrative of their level of control over children’s schedules and family lives. And further, signifies the activities that their children are participating in are selected to cultivate important skills and abilities, or build cultural capital, and thus are demonstrative of their upper-middle class status. As Reilly illustrates, often these extra-curricular pursuits are designed to be enrichment opportunities:

She does soccer and she does ballet ... and then she swims in the summer. And then Amy does Little Gym, and she’s done community classes like fun fit, and craft classes ... And they have after school things that will start too, like next year [Avery] will do brownies, and after school clubs, like art club, Spanish club, so like they meet an hour for a week, just like more enrichment things that she will do.

Like Reilly explains, parents believe they need to offer their children as many enrichment opportunities and experiences as they can, as these activities are thought to bring children some future benefit (Messner, 2009; Pugh, 2009)⁷.

Ultimately the Valley View children’s activities, afforded through economic capital, are an exercise in distinction. They serve as enrichment opportunities targeted at the acquisition of a specific experience, an important skill set, and a “legitimate

⁷ Interestingly, Hofferth and Sandberg (1998) found that children whose mother has more education tend to participate in more enrichment activities and passive leisure time than do children with mothers without a college education.

competence,” or accordingly, cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 245). Families convert their economic capital into cultural capital through their children’s participation in extra-curricular pursuits such as sports, religious education, various music classes, multiple forms of dance, foreign language, extra tutoring, and scouts. These activities are indicative of the parental desire to build valuable cultural capital in their children, as well as their location in the upper-middle class cultural field, as children’s activities mirror parental capital and are shaped by family circumstances (Dagkas & Stathi, 2007; Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001). The Valley View children are not just participating in sports, for instance, soccer which is emblematic of middle class lives (Andrews, 1999; Andrews et al., 1997), instead they are involved in more distinctive, rarer activities such as badminton, chess, tae kwon do, hip hop, multiple foreign languages, and more. For example, this idea is clearly evidenced through Stephanie telling me about the parent-child music class in which her husband, Dave, and their 18 month old son, Adrian, participate. Similar to all of the Valley View children’s activities, through this class, Stephanie and Dave have exercised their social and cultural capitals in finding out about the class and deciding to enroll, and employed their economic capital to afford it. Through their involvement, they work to convert, transmit, and reproduce their class-based privilege in and through Adrian, as he gains valuable and distinctive cultural (and presumably social) capital.

Similarly, summer camp represents an additional, enriching activity popular among the Valley View families⁸. Camps used to be places where kids “camped, hiked in the woods, learned about plants and animals, or told firelight stories about ghosts or mountain lions,” however today camps are specialized experiences, at least in the upper-middle class (Louv, 2006, p. 2). Many Valley View children participate in different camps from week to week, depending on what competency they are interested in pursuing. For all the mothers, camp was utilized as a cultural capital building opportunity as it provides children with enrichment, enhances certain skills, and gives them something fun and distinctly different to do. Sabrina viewed camp as “an opportunity to try things you don’t get to try, like now they’re doing an art camp.” Cathy also explained, “I like to help them keep advancing their skills, and it’s a benefit to learn from somebody other than their coaches, they can gain some other insight.” She continued:

in a typical summer, I will try to put Michael in three to four weeks of day camp, and Alex into two or three. But some of them are shorter camps ... And for Michael, it’s easy because he picks his favorite sports ones. Alex [is] doing a magicians’ camp, a robotics camp—his are a little bit different.

Certainly a magicians camp or robotics camp indicate specialized enrichment opportunities for children, as these experiences are neither common, nor mandatory

⁸ From a commonsense point of view, it would seem that working parents use camps for childcare in the summer, whereas a stay-at-home mother would not use camps because she is available to her kids. However, every single mother interviewed reported having their children in camp at one time or another, regardless of their own status in the labor force. Of the 20 mothers interviewed, Lynn was the only one who reported finding a camp that eliminated the use of a regular babysitter, as she routinely worked from 10 to two on weekdays and her kids’ camp was from nine-thirty to three Monday through Friday. The other 19 mothers explained that either they were home in the summers to facilitate camp schedules, or if they worked, employed a babysitter who could drive to help with various drop-offs and pick-ups. Mothers who did require childcare due to their professions used a combination of camp and babysitters, as they did not want be forced to put their kids in camp all day every day as a solution for child care.

skill sets for later life. Overall, these Valley View families invest their economic capital in distinctive camps in an effort to develop particular cultural capitals in their children.

Demonstrating their lived, privileged reality, these enriching experiences, be it camp, music, language, or sports, were closely monitored and implemented into children's lives to promote a diverse, "well-balanced" (Heather) acquisition of cultural capital, rather than to secure college scholarships or future accolades. However, children's activities were not an afterthought; rather they represented a concerted mothering "strategy" (Stephanie), a word which signals an effort to program particular activities and experiences into children's lives for a compelling reason. The mother's "strategy" was to introduce and provide of a variety of enriching opportunities in their children's lives, with the goal of ensuring they received a class-appropriate, well-rounded, developmental experience, rich in cultural capital. For instance, Elizabeth explained the value of cultural exposure:

I want them to be exposed to different cultures as far as art, the arts, and music, and the sports, those are things that are big for me. I think, you know, I think sports are great for kids, I think they're great. But I also think things like, you know, music, and drama, and stuff like that, or science, or whatever you can find.

Similarly Kelly believes in having a "healthy balance," a mindset which includes physical activity but also art, reading, and relaxation:

I think that sports has a huge—I think it's really important. And I think it's important to be outside and be healthy, and you know get fresh air, and not be inside all the time, and it's good to get off your bottom and move. But you know, in the same respect, clearly we do like arts and crafts, and we do like reading, and we do have quiet time too—but I think it's good to have a healthy balance.

And Reilly praised a “holistic” approach with the goal of having her children involved in both individual and group experiences:

I think that swimming ... is really individual I think, individual constitution, the team in the soccer, is the team, and the ballet is more of the art, so I try the holistic. And then music we'll add in, and, brownies one day ... More holistic I think is what were going for, a little bit of everything, but not a lot of everything, I don't think that's necessary.

Reilly's description of adding in particular activities for her children at some to-be-determined point in the future demonstrates her evolving and carefully cultivated approach to provide enriching activities for her children. She is not attempting to over-schedule her kids with things they do not need, rather her comment emphasizes her concerted effort to “add in ... a little bit of everything” to build her children's cultural capital. Like the others, Stephanie explained that her “strategy was to try just a lot of different things.” The mother's exhibition of power and control in discussing their children's activities is both demonstrative of their self-confidence and class-based privilege. Like Pugh (2009) found, universally mothers work to make sure that children have the right intangible experiences in their life in order to be well-rounded and gain a distinct sense of cultural capital. However, the children's acquisition of cultural capital is developed directly from their white, upper-middle class experiences, and thus tends to reproduce their social privilege, as well as the class-based, socially segregated boundaries shaping their childhood and family lives (Byrne, 2006; Veenstra, 2007).

Ultimately, the mothers indicated that their focus on not over-scheduling their children was part of a determined attempt to facilitate ample time for relaxation. The

women defended their beliefs about limiting activities and maintaining a sane, calm family life by explaining their position as a mothering ideology:

I worry about—I don't think they should be over-scheduled because, one, I feel especially once they get into school, I feel the whole social interactions in school sometimes they really need some playdates with friends to sit and bond and just ease, like just make good friends, and you know it's nice to have some time for that. And also I feel that you really need some down time with nothing. (Stephanie)

I try to keep our family life sane, because there's four of them, and if they all had multiple activities going at the same time ... it would just be unpleasant. I believe a kid has the right to come home after school and watch TV for an hour, and have snacks, and you know they have brothers and sisters to play with and hangout, and do their homework, and I try to have calmer home life. (Sabrina)

It's okay to not have a million activities ... they come home, they're on the computer, they read books, they watch TV, but our life is not frenetic. (Heather)

But this year I gave her a little break, she started a new school ... [and] she had a rough teacher, and so I just wanted her to come home and rest and do her homework, and read books, and play with her sister kind of thing this year. So she did one [activity only]. (Reilly)

I don't think they need to be in too many things, because I'm really an advocate of down time and stuff like that. (Ellen)

Like these sentiments illustrate, the women were committed to the idea that there was no reason to have their children involved in too many activities in order to leave time to relax and play. The mothers' contention that their children should be entitled to a break is demonstrative of their social position which offers them a relative level of "freedom with respect to [their] capital" giving them the "power over necessity" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 256). The Valley View families feel entitled and justified in resisting the hyper-scheduled nature of middle-class lives, and demonstrate this by exercising their distinctive upper-middle class tastes and preferences. This "distinction and pretention

... only exist through each other, and it is the relation ... which produces the value of culture and the need to possess it" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 250). The mothers work hard to make sure their children have enough down time and the appropriate enriching activities to gain a well-rounded sense of cultural capital.

Interestingly, avoiding over-scheduling appeared to be more for the mother's preferences, their preservation of family time, and their own sanity, as opposed to a reflection of their children's desires. For instance, Stephanie told me a story regarding her daughter's gymnastics participation:

Zoe for a while, you know she really likes gymnastics, and I just find, I've sort of given up on it, because ... one, it's a hike, and two, I don't like the classes very much, like they have lots of kids, it seems a lot about just getting the kids and then making the money and the instructor seems so-so. She's learning a little bit, like when she did the classes, but not, I just felt it wasn't worth it for me—the driving all the way there, and not getting that much out of it, like if it was really excellent, I'd feel it's worth it. So I kinda gave up on that just because it's not easy to do.

Stephanie's issue with Zoe's gymnastics participation revolves around the gym being a long distance from her house as well as her daughter's lack of aptitude with the sport. She mentions that if the program was excellent, she might continue, but instead she has stopped, and further, has not looked into additional gymnastics programs for Zoe, even though, according to Stephanie, she really likes it. In a similar example, Lila explained her outlook on scheduling children's activities:

It's like so much of it is parenting I find too, because I don't want to be at the gymnastics center all the time ... And I don't know, she would love [it]—she would've said yes to the gymnastic team, but I'm like, I don't think I want to do that.

She followed up by telling me, like Stephanie, that her eight year old daughter, Ella, really loves gymnastics and wants to do it during the upcoming winter in a program that is 25 minutes away. In an effort to dissuade her from that program, Lila enrolled Ella in the YMCA gymnastics team over the summer that is “right around the corner” and fewer hours per week, but reported thus far Ella did not like it. Part of Lila’s reason for attempting to force the Y’s program on Ella was clear when she said:

I think they compete against each other and the Y always loses, so it’s like, you know, I don’t know, it’s just a little bit of a lower level which I think is probably enough—I mean Ella’s not like a gymnast, she’s probably—I mean I just don’t see it for her, but that’s actually what she really loves, those kinds of things, so I don’t know, a lot of it’s parenting I guess.

Inherent in Lila’s explanation of Ella’s aptitude versus desire, is a clear message of what she is and is not willing to do for her children. There was no mention of the financial implications of these programs, simply it was a matter of time that Lila did not want to spend at a gym that was far away, particularly given that she did not believe her daughter had a future in gymnastics. Overall, she was not against Ella’s involvement in the activity of gymnastics, but her participation had to be convenient. In a similar vein, Rachel explained that she also believed the “burden [is] on the parents and I’m a little selfish that way, and I just don’t think either one of [my kids] is like ... you know?” In the context of this statement, Rachel was hinting at the idea that neither of her two children were ever going to be amazing athletes, and therefore she did not deem the time spent on multiple activities that interfered with family life to be necessary. Rachel mentioned that her son loves ice hockey but that their family does not “get up in time for him to go and be there by 7:45 [am] on a Saturday.” She explained:

there's just so many things that they could be doing, but you gotta draw the line somewhere, and I'm the kinda parent that I will not over-schedule them or myself. Like I'm not really willing to take out a lot of personal time, and I only have two kids.

She followed up by again referring to herself as "selfish," telling me:

When you have multiple kids, you have to think about the impact on the other child. And frankly it sounds selfish, and I think Alan and I do think about ourselves ... Like even if my kid was an amazing would be Olympic athlete, I just don't think I would ever go put them in something.

Rachel, like Stephanie and Lila, was not willing to go to great lengths for her children's activity participation regardless of their aptitude. Similarly, almost all of the mothers explained that they put a stop to their children's activities that were annoying to attend regardless of their children's preferences:

But they don't do meets. And again, those are such a pain in the neck, I feel almost happy sometimes that they don't do them. They're long, and they're far away. (Heather)

Like Anne's Aquatics in the winter, the last thing I wanted to do was go out of the house sitting by the fireplace and go to Anne's Aquatics and hear them complain about how cold the water was, you know? ... It was great for them, and she's really nice, but I—you know what I mean? That was more of a hassle. (Barb)

He said he wanted to do hockey. And I said you know what, I'm going to have to draw the line on that one. They have early morning practices everyday and it's far away. (Jessica)

It's a good activity during the summer. I think that swimming, it has a lot of overhead during the rest of the year. If it wasn't for that I would probably take [the] kids swimming ... I'm pretty sure if I were to expose them to swimming during the school year they would do it—it's just too much strain on [me]. (Lauren)

The mothers spoke very openly about the drudgery of their children's non-Valley View activities, explaining how boring and time consuming they were, taking time away from their own lives (cf. Byrne, 2006). This attitude was distinctly indicative of their lived

experience of privilege as their “distance from necessity” allowed them to adopt this attitude (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 177). In no way were these women negligent, or ignoring their children, rather they believed their resistance towards this hyper-scheduled, activity-oriented lifestyle characterizing family lives today was a rational perspective that benefitted their family. However, these families’ social class privilege allows them to adopt this distinctive position because they are “sure of what they are [and] do not care what they seem,” as opposed to the middle classes who are extremely cognizant of appearance and consumption of particular cultural goods and services (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 253). The Valley View mothers have the confidence to know that they do not need to over-schedule their children with sports and activity participation; instead they exercise choice in selecting distinctive, enriching experiences for their children that will help them acquire valuable cultural capital, and thus reproduce their social class position.

It’s not the Destination, but the Journey: “Experience” as Cultural Capital

Discussed above, the Valley View mothers’ point of view on children’s activities is more about giving their children an enrichment experience than it is to develop their aptitude. Their desire for their children to have a “good experience” is a euphemism for gaining valuable, experiential, embodied cultural capital. This idea is illustrated through all of the women’s comments indicating the focus on the intangible benefits of activity participation such as personal growth, social skills, and the development of various aptitudes (see also Arendell, 2000; Baron, 2007; Coakley, 2004; Dunn, Kinney, & Hofferth, 2003; Messner, 2009). Without a doubt, the mothers feel that it is important that their children have the experience of participation for the cultural capital they can

accrue, not the medals they can win, an attitude linked to their social position. For instance Rachel explained:

You know for me, all these sports are recreational and for exercise, and for the team camaraderie, and for you know, that kind of thing ... I'm not training like the next Olympic athlete, or even like collegiate athlete, it's like I want you to do it for fun, and I want you to develop like some skills and stuff ... It's like if they're good and they like it, fine, as long as it fits into the family schedule.

These families do not need to rely on their children's talents to secure a college scholarship or some other future accolades; instead their economic and cultural stability affords them the opportunity to exercise more control over their lives, and thus their children's extra-curricular pursuits. Similarly, Sarah told me, "when we look at sports, we were intense about it, we take it seriously, but I don't expect my kids to be Olympians, I don't expect them necessarily to even make high school teams the way things are these days." She continued to tell me that "if they're getting a lot of pride and self-esteem out of an activity, then that's better—then it's a positive use," again indicating that the value coming from these activities is the participatory experience over and above her children's success. Furthering this idea, Sarah revealed a conversation with her four year old to me:

Ashley said, 'do you think I should [move up] mom, they said that I should try?' I said, 'you know Ashley, you're having a great time, why don't you just stay where you're at?' 'Well I don't know.' I said, 'why don't you choose.' And she said, 'I really want to be with my friends on the [team now],' and I was like great, there is no reason [to push].

All the mothers felt that it was not about their children's aptitude or them becoming the best at what they do, rather it was the experience that counts. Linda said to me of her son, "I always tell him it doesn't really matter, you don't have to be first in everything, I

don't care even if you are last," and Reilly said to me of her daughter, "she was totally last, it was awesome, but the fact that she tried and finished [is what is important]."

Sabrina told me that "I'm not in it so he can get a scholarship for college," and very honestly she continued, "Gavin is not terribly talented at swimming, you know if he can feel good about himself" that is what is important. Sabrina then confessed:

fortunately none of my kids seem to be gifted athletes. So, or I should say I mean unfortunately, we all wish that our kid had a passion or a gift for something that they were really good at, but the truth is, most kids don't. Even if they have a passion for it, they may not have the gift, but whatever—so we just sort of have run of the mill, typical kids. So you know we just like to keep them busy, expose them to stuff, but keep it simple.

Sabrina's candid sentiments are representative of how all of these mothers felt. Like Tracy who admitted that her son "is not a natural athlete, he has to work on it," all of the women indicated to me that they did not enroll their child in an activity to be the next prodigy, or for them to have acclaim associated with their performance as middle-class parents might, rather it was for the experience and opportunity. For instance, Kristen volunteered:

Now you didn't ask this, but I will also say, and I'm glad [the kids are] out of the room. It's never crossed my mind that either of them would become a serious swimmer, I don't envision any of that. Hey, I guess it could happen I suppose, you know maybe they would like swim competitively in high school and then college or whatever—but that's not at all on my radar screen. But it's probably not likely because they're so small.

Many of the women recognized their children's lack of aptitude in multiple activities and therefore believed it was not necessary to sacrifice family life for them, yet they were still important for the children in terms of the enriching experience and intangible benefits accrued from them. The mothers were very realistic about their children's

potential, and further, were not looking to their children to bring their family any type of recognition, cultural promotion, or status, as they had already achieved a particular social class position. Upper-income families schedule children's activities in order to maintain and protect their status, rather than promote it, in an effort to reproduce their social class privilege (Bourdieu, 1984; Ostrander, 1984). Ultimately these mothers have the "illusion of 'natural distinction'" which is based on "nothing other than their own way of existing" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 255). The Valley View families' "power over necessity" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 256) offers them a mind-set in which they can confidently avoid anything that is going to make their lives unnecessarily frenetic or hectic. Thus these mothers focus on preserving family time, and work hard to organize distinctive, enriching activities for children, with the end goal being to cultivate cultural capital through experience. This maternal attitude helps families successfully convert, transmit, and reproduce their relative capitals, as well as their social class privilege, in and through their children.

"The Fabric of your Family": The Importance of Valley View in Children's Lives

All of the mothers speak so fondly of their relationship and time at Valley View, as evidenced by Heather's comment that the pool is "part of our whole summer now ... it becomes just a part of the fabric of your family." Her revelation indicates the importance of the pool in her family's life, and further, alludes to the major time commitment her family has made to their club membership. Valley View operates as a cultural field where families spend a great deal of time interacting together with others sharing the same class habitus. Fields are defined by particular contexts, such as sport

and/or leisure, and therefore, members belong to a particular field due to a shared, common belief for the field itself (DeFrance, 1995). Valley View is a white, upper-middle class, socially segregated physical space where parents work to strategically construct their children's lives (DeVault, 2003; Harrington, 2006; LaRossa, 2005b). The sense of distinction the Valley View families accrue from participation at the pool centers around their belief that *this* pool offers a specific, specialized, enriching, capital building experience for their children. Thus, membership operates as an important component of their lived experience of privilege, and members reproduce and reinforce their class position in and through each other.

All of the mothers indicated that their Valley View membership played a significant part in their childrearing ideology, an idea which, in and of itself, indicates their class-based "power over necessity" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 256). For instance, the women believe it is important for their kids to be outside, in a "good active space," as Faith described it, and take pleasure in that time. Margaret told me that enjoying the outdoors is "the seed, it's the gift I am giving [my kids], like they will love to move, to swim, to go out, walk and hike and appreciate." However, as many of the mothers believe, this opportunity to play outside is no longer a viable option for children's free time activity. For instance, Sabrina said she liked the pool in particular because, "I like [the kids] to have some kind of physical activity because kids aren't outside running around as much anymore." Accordingly, part of the reason the women feel Valley View membership is important has to do with their fears of modern childhood and the perceived differences between their own youth and the experience they are offering

their children. The baby boomers, the end of which are today's parents of youth under age 18, are the last generation that "enjoyed a kind of free, natural play that seems, in the era of kid pagers, instant messaging, and Nintendo, like a quaint artifact" (Louv, 2006, p. 1). For instance, Kristen recalled of her childhood:

summertime in my neighborhood as a kid when I wasn't away at camp, we used to leave home, and my mother didn't see me for five hours and she was home doing whatever and I was out, I don't know where I was, running around with the kids in the neighborhood.

Similarly, Tracy told me of the "dinner bell" days:

well the neighborhood I grew up in ... we would go outside and find each other, and we were gone, and parents would ring the dinner bell and you knew everyone's dinner bell sound, and we used to go home. And we would just go outside and play games, you know kick the can, or running races or whatever, which is kinda fun, but we don't have that here.

Barb explained to me that she wished she and her husband had more land so that their kids had more space to play as she didn't feel comfortable letting her children run around in their neighborhood, telling me, like many others, that today "it's not like when we were little and we could run around in the street all day for hours and hours and never come home until the bell rang." And, Stephanie recounted stories her husband had told her about his childhood:

all the neighborhood kids would spend all day at the pool, and they would just leave their house, which is so nice—you just can't do that anymore. They [would] just walk out of the house, be there all day, I'm not even sure who watched them, maybe the lifeguard there. And he said at dinner time the moms would yell, you know, and they would go back home.

Many of the women explained similar childhood experiences, and all mentioned that today children cannot be left unsupervised outside because it can be dangerous, and therefore they spend much less time outdoors than children used to. "Fear is the most

potent force that prevents parents from allowing their children the freedom they themselves enjoyed when they were young ... Fear of traffic, of crime, of stranger-danger—and nature itself” (Louv, 2006, p. 124). Though many parents have now sworn off outdoor play for their children, “perception is nine-tenths of the law,” and in fact, many places have become safer over the years, but horror stories cause parents to have irrational fears (Louv, 2006, p. 28). Additionally, many neighborhoods, condos, and homeowners associations have legal agreements that prohibit the same type of outdoor play that existed 30 years ago (such as tree houses, play near water, etc.) (Louv, 2006). In response to today’s parents concerns about their children’s corporeal safety, adult-supervised, structured activities for kids to participate in have developed in middle-class, suburban communities around the country, often in the form of organized sports programs (Coakley, 2004, 2006; Messner, 2009; Rosenfeld & Wise, 2000). As discussed above, the Valley View mothers do enroll their children in some structured youth sports, however they prefer to find distinctive, enriching activities, an additional reason why these upper-middle class parents value their pool membership. Thus the pool operates as a cultural field which provides a balance between the structured nature of youth activities, and the unstructured aspect of children’s exploration and free play, and as such, offers a distinctive opportunity for parents to cultivate children’s cultural capital. The remainder of this chapter discusses how Valley View, as a safe physical space to engage in unstructured, autonomous, confidence building physical activity, functions to convert and transmit various familial capitals, namely cultural, in an effort to reproduce empowered, independent upper-middle class individuals.

“Imaginative Play” and Unstructured Swim Time

The Valley View mothers have deemed their neighborhoods unsuitable for their children to experience the same type of free play that they had as children. Yet, without question, the women believe the idea of unstructured play is imperative to their children’s development and view the summer as a distinct chance to give them a break and true play time. In contrast, many middle class children are leading fast-paced, hyper-scheduled lives, complete with numerous after-school activities that do not allow for unstructured, unsupervised, child-driven play (Ginsburg, 2007; Hofferth & Sandberg, 1998; Rosenfeld & Wise, 2000). And in fact, Louv (2006) argues that “our culture currently places so little value on natural play” (p. 117-8). However, due to their relative privilege, these Valley View parents demonstrate their distinctive class position, different from that of middle class parents, by taking the summer to slow down and relax. For instance, Stephanie said, “in summer we try to definitely take it easy, but you know they do the swimming, and maybe a few camps here and there, but really not much else, so it does feel like a break.” Cathy told me that in the “summer what they do is, my philosophy is that they should do a lot of nothing.” Likewise, Sarah explained that her family is “pretty low key in the summer,” and Kelly tried to create “an easy relaxed summer” for her kids. Sabrina believed, “kids have the right to lay around and play ... it’s good to hangout.” Further, Kristen felt:

It’s important for kids to have some real down time during the summer, to like get bored, and come up with something creative to do ... if they’re sacked all day everyday during the summer with camps, and with practices on top of that, [it’s] too hectic, you know, and [the girls] have both done some really cool things this summer.

Like many of the mothers, Kristen believed that it was important to foster her children's creativity. Cultivating creativity is code for building cultural capital. Parents work hard to offer their children opportunities to use their imaginations and promote originality, skills which will bring them distinction, and set them apart from others in their cultural field. Similarly, Faith told me of the summertime, "it's okay to just kind of lounge around, but [the girls] do a lot of playing, imaginative play and stuff ... I try to make it a little bit more relaxed." Sabrina told me that swimming at Valley View becomes "a summer thing" that allows her kids to play and have fun. She continued to tell me that "it really is good clean fun, they're outside, they're active, they're using their imagination, and they're getting physical activity, and they're getting fresh air." All of these benefits contribute to these families' "holistic" childrearing approach that produces "well-rounded" children. Tracy explained, "just being outside and having fun, I mean that's what being a kid is about during the summer." Therefore, frequenting the pool allowed Tracy, and others, to foster this ideology throughout the summer months by being actively involved at Valley View. I believe the women's focus on "imaginative play" and an "easy relaxed summer" defines their upper-middle class perspective on childrearing. Further this mentality, again, is illustrative of their "distance from necessity" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 177) as they do not have to worry about the financial or time constraints of summer childcare, nor are they focused on their children's year round involvement in structured activity. Rather, these mothers appreciate the summer for the relaxing freedom it appears to bring their lives, and choose to capitalize on this opportunity by spending time at Valley View, cultivating, or successfully converting and

transmitting cultural capital in and through children. It takes time to transform and reproduce cultural capital, and pool membership facilitates this process through repeat exposure to a particular, formative, enriching, distinctive experience.

The relaxing fluid nature of summer is enhanced at Valley View as parents find the pool fits in with their summer mentality offering children an opportunity for unstructured, yet supervised, play. Many child development specialists advocate allowing children to play freely and creatively in the effort to “find a balance between adult direction and child boredom” (Louv, 2006, p. 168). And further, play is a significant component to healthy child development and “allows children to create and explore a world they can master, conquering their fears while practicing adult roles, sometimes in conjunction with other children or adult caregivers” (Ginsburg, 2007, p. 183). Illustrating these ideas, Rachel, like other mothers reflecting on the loss of the dinner bell days, said that her kids “can’t really go run around so much out here, but at the pool they sort of have that area to do that where they’re not being watched over all the time, but they kind of are at the same point.” Similarly, Stephanie enjoyed the “unstructured” nature of the pool and found it to be a “nice carefree kind of time.” She continued to tell me:

I feel at the pool, it’s, in a way they get a little bit of unsupervised—it’s not really unsupervised, I’m there—but they can kind of, especially when their friends are there, they can do what they want and I’m not interfering. So they get a little bit of what they say kids really need, is like unstructured, unsupervised time to just do their own thing.

Stephanie’s comments are important for a couple of reasons. First, they reveal her possession of “cultural capital in the form of health values, perceptions, health

knowledge and behavioural norms ... needed to develop healthy lifestyle patterns (Abel, 2008, p. 2). Specifically, she indicates social class position through the knowledge of what she believes to be appropriate childrearing practices, probably gleaned from a variety of sources available to her, including her social network, health care providers, and the media. And secondly, she demonstrates the ability to utilize her relative capitals to secure a Valley View membership to provide her kids with this appropriate upbringing, and thus the chance to cultivate their cultural capital. As far as the mothers are concerned, their time at Valley View is a win-win because the pool offers the unique opportunity for children to engage in what they perceive as free play, and parents to loosely supervise their children's physical activity.

Cathy, whose kids are active on the swim team, explained that the pool serves a dual purpose for her boys in the summer as "there is an element [of] physical activity, structured physical activity. Then there is the sort of unstructured physical activity that just comes with playing in a pool." Many mothers repeated Cathy's sentiments regarding unstructured play and structured activity at the pool. For instance Rachel told me, "we go to the pool in the afternoon, try to get there a little early, if there is no camp going on, we try to get there a little early so they can have some play time before swim team." Lynn explained the same, "we are there about an hour or so before the swim team, and that's like, Evan wants that, he wants to have play time first, and then do the swim team." Barb said:

I'll let them play for the 45 minutes and do what they like, try to get them to do a little swimming practice, and mostly I just want them to get the exercise and enjoy themselves and have a good feeling about being at the pool, be happy

while they're at the pool, not be bugged. We have to bug them about so many other things.

The balance that Valley View offers as a space for both sport and recreation, or structure and play, is a significant reason the mothers view it as important for their children. Further, as Reilly illustrates, this tension requires a conscious effort on the part of the mothers in order to make sure kids have enough unstructured play time at the pool:

I think is if she is doing the pre-dive and the swim team, I will have to think about having her have enough play time too, so that she doesn't go to the pool and work the whole time. She is six, she wants to play, I don't want to only be at the pool just for her to work, I want her to go to think that the pool is fun and go play as well.

Reilly, like many moms, believes that her daughter "needs to play and just be a little kid," yet she also wants her to learn to be a proficient swimmer, and therefore Valley View offers her the perfect combination of structured and unstructured play. Cathy told me, echoing Faith's idea of imaginative play, that the boys just "play, and it is pure play, I mean they create the games as they're going off the diving board," and "they go over, I noticed during adult swim ... Michael and Alex have created some handball game that they play on the court, hopefully nobody else is over there that they're disturbing, but they play a handball game over there." Similarly, Lynn told me that her boys play ping pong or use the tennis or basketball courts to have fun, in addition to playing in the pool. My interviews with the kids confirmed the mother's observations, as many of them described fun pool or field games that they invented. For instance, Gary told me:

The good part is the grass, like behind the pool there is a huge grass field, and at adult swim I can play sports with my friends, like throw a ball which is good for any sport, and the tennis court and the basketball courts, that's nice.

And Andy said to me that he divides his time at the pool between playing and practicing his swimming: “[I] play and sometimes I just swim around, and like we can play with the basketball, and I just swim around practicing my breathing and stuff, and then I just play for a bit.” It became clear to me that the time children have at the pool does in fact give them the chance to use their imaginations to amuse themselves, as opposed to using various media for entertainment, and thus illustrates an additional way Valley View promotes the production of cultural capital.

Ehrenreich (1989, p. 84) argues that parents are always at an impasse as they are conflicted about how much to “encourage their children to be innovative and to ‘express themselves,’” versus push them to develop “self-discipline and control.” Louv (2006) explains that children need more interaction with nature, and one way to combat what he has termed Nature-Deficit Disorder, is to build more private places for children to play, and therefore, like many of the mothers believe, Valley View is the perfect balance between organized activity and creative play. The pool becomes a space where parents can supervise their children “without actually having to interact with them,” as Sabrina told me. She believes that if she “just let[s] them play, and feel safe and happy in the pool, and then the rest comes.” Playtime can promote children’s confidence and offer them an individual experience in their world (Louv, 2006). Valley View, as a cultural field consumed through various forms and levels of capital, and a feature of the upper-middle class family habitus, offers children a structured, safe environment where they can experience free play, keep both their bodies and imaginations active, and build cultural capital through the acquisition of distinctive skills and embodied dispositions.

However, as other chapters have mentioned, these mothers fail to acknowledge their relative class-based advantage as these distinctive opportunities they advocate are actually luxuries many Americans do not have access to. Further, previously discussed, the pool is a socially segregated, white, upper-middle class cultural field, and therefore these women's notions of the pool as integral to their lives in so many important ways is representative of their taken for granted, lived experience of privilege. Accordingly, children's acquisition of cultural capital is a specific, white, upper-middle class cultural capital that will be "effective" in their class-based cultural field (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247). The demonstration of cultural capital produces social distance and conveys certain, distinctive class-based subtleties illustrative of social position (Bourdieu, 1984; Veenstra, 2007). Ultimately, through these inadvertent social boundaries dictating pool membership, Valley View offers a site for parents to convert, transmit, and effectively reproduce their social class privilege in and through their children.

Controlled Freedom: Children's Independence inside the Fence

Since the mothers believe that the pool is a space for children to engage in supervised, yet unstructured, imaginative play, they also view it as a unique opportunity for children to experience a level of freedom and autonomy that they do not have in other aspects of their lives. However, often children's play time becomes more formalized and structured (cf. Arendell, 2000), hence I argue this independence is an illusion, as children are constantly supervised during their time at Valley View, thus experiencing a *controlled freedom*. This controlled freedom is emblematic of maternal power and control as they have recognized how to utilize the pool environment to

facilitate child development and the promotion cultural capital. While all of the mothers are generally present when their kids are at the pool, many of the women are simultaneously enjoying leisure time (including reading, socializing, or talking on the phone, discussed at length in chapter four), and admittedly not paying very close attention to their children. Certainly those with very young children do follow them around to make sure they are safe, however all parents claimed that they allowed their six to 10 year olds some unsupervised pool time. For example, Rachel, mother of a seven and nine year old, confessed:

Most of the time, frankly I don't know where [the kids] are. I usually try to know where they are, I scan, and then I'm off socializing or reading my magazine, but it's very little supervision. And [if] they wanna go to the tennis court, they go there; my kids have always been good with—I know they'll never leave the area. Even when they were little little, they would never do something like that, [and] I'm sure they like that. They just go there and they can do whatever they want. They go to the high dive ... anything goes basically.

Or Nancy, mother of seven year old twins and a nine year old, explained that this past summer “is the first year that I'm not paying attention, close attention to them. Last year I always was watching them, but this year I'm just—I let them [go].” Tracy equated this lack of close supervision as freedom for her children at the pool, and illustrated this point when she explained, “I don't have to be watching them. They're there, they can check in with me, but they are doing their own thing. I think they like the independence of it.” The kids also indicated they felt like they had a bit of freedom while they were at the pool. For example, Alex said to me, “well, I just feel like really free to do whatever I want,” and similarly, Gary told me, “I usually do whatever I feel like, like, either swimming, playing, [or] diving.” This freedom allows children their distance from adults,

and an opportunity to experience independence and fun on their own terms. For children, being separated from an adult controlled world is important as they experience particular freedoms and interact in their own sphere (Louv, 2006). Both adults and children feel as though the pool offers children a significant developmental opportunity that does not exist many other places in their lives. For this reason, Valley View brings member families an important sense of distinction.

Further, Cathy described how her children feel “autonomous” at Valley View, yet she alludes to supervising their behavior, thus demonstrating her children’s controlled freedom. Reilly, like other mothers, offered an example of how the pool can provide freedoms to her six-year old daughter, Avery, that she does not get in other venues, or even her own home:

I think she has a sense of autonomy there too, because I think she thinks she’s becoming a big kid who can go to the diving board and jump off it that’s what she wants, or she can swim a lap, or she can sit on the side and have an ice cream or like a clayboy or an ice. So I think she feels a sense of autonomy that she doesn’t quite have in other places, like home, or the front, in our little driveway circle area she needs to stay right there, she can’t go past the cone that we always have out, but at the pool she can kinda do what she wants to do, she can go to the bathroom now by herself without needing to have me walk her there, you know? So that’s, I think she loves that idea that she’s got some autonomy and that she can kinda do as she pleases when she’s there.

Reilly’s description of Avery not being allowed past a cone in her driveway that sits on a quiet, suburban cul-de-sac is disheartening, yet born out of a very real fear for her children’s corporeal safety. Therefore, Reilly’s family membership to Valley View is incredibly important because she believes it gives Avery a social space to interact and experience a sense of autonomy, though in actuality it is a controlled freedom. Reilly’s use of “autonomy” to describe her daughter’s self-reliance and independence at the

pool, in and of itself, demonstrates her class-based power and control, and further, the drive to produce “autonomous” upper-middle class children who are self-sufficient and empowered. Her sentiments, like all the mothers, allude to autonomy and/or independence as a valuable, experiential cultural capital to possess. Likewise, Lila believed that her daughters feel at home at Valley View, and that this sense of security offered them a feeling of independence that, again, they do not even feel at home:

I just feel like she’s very comfortable at the pool, she feels you know, like she would never hesitate to go to dive team without somebody, so I think she does have a sense of independence there that she doesn’t always have everywhere. And I mean even Amanda is most independent at the pool sometimes, I mean lately she wants to go to the bathroom by herself, and she’s hard to get away from me at the house even, and lately she says she wants to go to the bathroom by herself, and I should sit on the side, I shouldn’t come in the pool, and I mean she’s developing some independence.

Similarly, Stephanie told me that while she is at the pool with her kids:

I’m not really interfering with them, and as long as they’re okay they can do what they want. And they have a big area to like just run around, like all around, and I think they like that, that freedom, the running around, and like even, you know, like, giving Zoe the money to—she and Ken can go walk to the ice cream, and it seems pathetic, but for them, that’s their little freedom, because it’s so hard to get that out here.

Interestingly Stephanie described her children’s sense of autonomy at the pool as “pathetic,” but believes this is the best she can do for her kids given where they live. Her sentiments illustrate her appropriation of Valley View into her children’s lives to offer them a particular, important developmental experience, or cultural capital, which will help shape them into upper-middle class adults. Faith also explained how the pool allows her children controlled freedom under her watchful eye:

I think Ellen feels like she, I mean I allow her to kind of do, be very independent, and she feels, and I think she knows that and probably feels good about it. And

Sally strongly wants to be independent at all times, and especially like running, going to the bathroom by herself, and going to the ice cream man herself, which I sort of limit. Like yesterday I let them go to the ice cream man, but I peeked, watched them from the gate and they didn't know, but it is you know, it is definitely a place where they do feel like, they feel ownership there, they feel like it's their pool, and they feel comfortable, and you know, Ellen loves to sign in by herself, that's a big thing.

Faith describes a situation in which she gave her children money and let them believe they were purchasing ice cream on their own, but actually followed them to make sure everything was alright. This scenario illustrates the idea of controlled freedom as the mothers explain a distinctive sense of independence their children feel at the pool, yet their movements can still be strictly supervised, albeit unbeknownst to them. Similarly, Cathy told me:

I think for [the boys] it is this place to go that is autonomous ... when they're there, I let them be themselves, and do their own thing, and I don't get in their face except for when they're misbehaving and they're gonna drive the [life]guard crazy.

These excerpts add credence to the idea that the mothers find pool participation to be an important formative experience for their children. Through Valley View membership, secured through economic capital, as well as social and cultural capital, these women have exercised their class-based privilege to provide a physical space for their children to have important time for unstructured, physically active play. Yet, this is a controlled freedom as everything takes place at the pool, a safe, restricted cultural field.

Ultimately this controlled freedom, and its associated benefits, contributes to children's acquisition of cultural capital, and marks the pool as a distinctive, significant physical space for member families.

Controlled freedom only exists at Valley View because parents understand their upper-middle class, white, cultural field as safe. Lynn, a mother to five and seven year old boys, explained that the intangible qualities the pool offers her children do in fact equate to a sense of safety, and encapsulated this idea when she recalled an interaction with her son:

‘when I’m at the pool, I’m gonna call you Mom [rather than Mommy],’ and I’m like ‘okay, any particular reason?’ And I think it was funny that he felt that he needed to verbalize that, like you know he’s a big boy when he’s there, and you know he is comfortable to be like, ok I’m going to the tennis courts, like there’s not a false sense of security, like I would say I’m still watching, but they don’t have to be in front of me to know that they’re okay, like I can like spot check or, you know? And I think they do feel a sense of independence, and that they’re being treated with a different level of respect knowing that Mommy’s letting me go the tennis court and she’s sitting on the other side of the gate, you know I think they do feel good about themselves when they’re there, because they see their own growth. And even, like other places, like I honestly, like I wouldn’t let them go into a bathroom by themselves, like if it’s the three of us, they don’t like it, but they have to come in with me. Like [at Valley View] they can go into the boys bathroom and they’re okay, where we wouldn’t do that at a restaurant, or a mall.

Amongst other signifiers of independence at Valley View, the women mentioned the pool offers an environment for their kids to use the bathroom by themselves, an idea which demonstrates children’s understanding of the subtle freedoms they are awarded at the pool, as well as the mothers’ belief in Valley View as a safe zone. For upper-middle class parents, solitary trips to the bathroom are symbolic of parents believing they are in a safe space (Pugh, 2009). The fact that children are not allowed to use the bathroom alone in other public places indicates both parental fear of some public spaces, and the level of control they have over their children’s minute by minute

existence. However, Valley View is not just another public space, rather it is distinctive, as Cathy explained:

the community, it's a real safe place to be ... and community building and that whole safeness ... And I think that's good for them. They need places that they could go where they can be on their own, like I don't take them to the mall and let them hangout there. So they get a place where they can be autonomous, they can be safe, people are looking out for them, people know them, and they're getting physical activity and sun, and health, it's great.

As Cathy, and others, believes, Valley View is safe, but many other public places, for example, the mall, are not. Many of the mothers use Valley View as a way to offer a developmentally important controlled freedom to their children. All of these mothers underlying messages allude to Lynn's contention that children are learning how to be "big kids" through participation at the pool. Overall, families have harnessed their class-based power and privilege to provide children with the Valley View experience, an intangible opportunity for controlled freedom, which promotes the acquisition of cultural capital.

The mothers believe these opportunities to be independent help their children learn responsibility. For instance, Lynn explained to me how her seven-year old son, Evan, takes accountability for getting himself to practice on time and is beginning to manage his own swimming participation:

every once and a while I see him, and he'll be totally engaged with whatever they're playing in the pool, and then he will look at the clock and say I have five more minutes right? And I'm expecting him to be upset by it, and then five minutes comes, and he's like okay guys I have to go. A lot of times someone else from, like he'll be with Matt, or he'll be with someone else and he will be the one shepharding them along. It's, he's all about, you know, abiding the rules, and schedule following, and you know, he's fine with that being his time, he stops and he goes.

Through his accountability for his own schedule, Evan is learning to manage his own life, yet once again, in a safe, controlled environment with mom watching from afar so nothing bad happens. Cathy, a self-professed “over protective parent and will acknowledge it obviously,” nervously allowed her oldest son to be at the pool alone one evening and help out with a swim meet in which he was not participating. She explained that doing this was “a big deal because I don’t typically let him places by himself for extending periods of time,” yet it turned out to be “the best experience for him, because he got an opportunity to do something I don’t typically let him do, now he knows I’ve seen him do it, and now I’ll be much more willing if similar type events come up.” Sabrina expanded on this idea, explaining that the pool offers her oldest son, Jason, an opportunity to manage his own life:

[the kids] grow to be independent in the pool, and he doesn’t have to tell me he’s going out to play the tennis court or like if you’re going to the bathroom, I mean it’s a small enough place, they’re not gonna, you know, I can find them if I need to. But now they can walk to the pool, and I’m not following Jason around to ask about swim team, I mean I say how was practice or whatever, but he kinda manages that part of his life, you know, what strokes he’s doing, and I have him work it out with the coach, you know, you don’t see me there, ‘why is he doing this stroke, coach?’

Sabrina explained to me that she generally tries to “empower” her kids to “be as independent as possible.” Valley View offers a safe, controlled space where her children can begin to take responsibility for their own lives. Sabrina’s contentions express her upper-middle class privilege as her goal to “empower” her children signals a concerted attempt to transmit her class-based power to her children through participation at the pool. To do this, Sabrina, like the other mothers, has employed her economic, social, and cultural capital to gain admission to Valley View, and through her family’s

interaction in this cultural field, she is subtly working to cultivate her children's acquisition of valuable cultural (and social) skills.

Interestingly, defining the idea of controlled freedom, Cathy described her children's sense of independence as "ironic because it's a safe zone, because it's lovely [and] fenced in." This contention is important to consider in a couple of ways. First, from the stand point that the pool is a confined, safe space for members only, in which parents are within 100 yards of their children at any given time. Nancy commented on size of the club grounds mentioning that because her kids "are in a 50 meters distance, they cannot do anything without me watching them." So while she, and the other women, speak to their children having loosely supervised time, and thus a level of independence at the pool, it is also clear that it is a tightly controlled freedom. And secondly, the idea of autonomy at the pool is ironic because Valley View is a space that provides semi-structured activity, rather than a totally unstructured activity with complete independence. Not only are parents within a few steps of their children, but there is a whole community of people watching out for each other, as well as lifeguards enforcing strict rules and regulations.

In no way is the pool a replacement for a child venturing out into the woods with their dog, a backpack, and a snack, only to return at dusk. Yet, as far as the Valley View parents are concerned, the pool is the best they can do to reconcile the idea of independent exploration with the concept of total supervision indoors. Additionally, the ability to provide this type of experience for their children is distinctly illustrative of their upper-middle class privilege, and exists only in opposition to the middle classes who

favor adult-controlled, regulated activities, and do not possess the economic capital to provide their children with a Valley View-type experience. The mothers interpret the pool as a cultural field where their social class privilege offers their children something they believe is imperative to a happy and healthy childhood: autonomous, imaginative play in a safe, restricted physical space. Consequently, this controlled freedom acquired at Valley View promotes children's development of valuable, experiential cultural capital, indicative of their upper-middle class status.

Developing a Distinct Sense of Confidence: Building Cultural Capital through Pool

Participation

Many of the women discussed how their belief in the unstructured play and autonomy that their children gain at Valley View builds a distinctive sense of confidence, an important embodied disposition signaling class privilege. Bourdieu (1984) argues "The relation to one's own body which is expressed in a certain manner and bearing—the 'natural' self-confidence, ease and authority of someone who feels authorized ... is one of the most visible traces of early and recurrent exposure" to a particular distinctive class experience and is a "powerful social marker" (p. 252). The most powerful element of cultural capital is "the logic of transmission," and therefore confidence, as a distinctive and convincing signal of class position, is a valuable form of cultural capital that parents work to transmit to their children. The mothers strongly advocate their children's involvement at Valley View because they believe pool participation helps them develop an important, class-defining sense of self-esteem. For example, Cathy explained that part of the reason the pool promotes confidence in her boys is because it

offers “a different world” than school, and “in some ways an escape” from “the pressure and all the stereotypes” that kids endure during the rest of the year. Cathy told me “there’s something about Valley View and the summer, and [the boys] have a different level of confidence.” Similarly, Stephanie believed, “I always feel the more skills that you have can really just help you be more confident,” and told me that being able to do something well in the pool, a fun, enjoyable environment, “gives them self-confidence.” Lynn explained, “both [the boys], more particularly this summer, have gained more confidence in their abilities” in the pool. She continued:

I think they feel good about themselves, you know they’re—Eddie’s diving where he never has ... like he feels like a big boy, and he feels like he’s improving ... Evan each day feels like he’s better than the day before, and you know he’s wanting to go to improve, and they do—they both love it. We went to my parents in New Jersey, and before we even got to the door, they were screaming they want to go show them their moves in the pool, you know, so we went to the pool, and they showed off, and you can tell they do feel good about themselves because of their pool experiences.

Likewise, Faith talked about how the pool has facilitated a sense of confidence in her daughters:

I think the pool has been good in terms of confidence. For Ellen, it’s a place where’s she’s tried new things and felt good about herself ... and when she swims across the pool, I mean every year there’s new things that she is able to do and she feels really good about herself. So it is definitely a place where—because swimming is hard, I think it’s a place where they both, when they do those things and accomplish those things, they feel really great. And Sally too ... and all she does is tell people I can swim in five feet, I can swim in five feet, she’s so proud of herself when she jumps off the side, and puts her face in the water, and so it’s a great, I think it’s a really great source of, just a place to build confidence for kids.

Both Lynn and Faith detail how their children have improved and acquired new swim-oriented skills, and this has increased their self-esteem. Gaining new swim skills is a

tangible experience for children as they learn and understand how to swim in the deep end, make it across the pool on their own, and go off the diving board. Cultural capital “is linked to the body and presupposes embodiment” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244), and accordingly, the comments from the mothers indicate that confidence, or cultural capital, and swim skills, or physical capital, are mutually constitutive. The Valley View families’ embodied cultural capital is expressive of social location, and further, brings them distinction as it signals class-based differences. Thus, the mothers believe it is important for their children to develop a strong sense of confidence through their participation at the pool, as this embodied disposition is a significant social marker. Upper-middle class children function as demonstrable status symbols, and the successful transmission of social class privilege illustrates great distinctive power.

Many of the mothers discussed the formation of a distinct sense of self-confidence as a child rearing goal. For example, Rachel explained, “I want [my kids] to have good high self-esteem ... just to build their confidence in all different ways, like to be confident, independent, giving kids, that’s kinda what I want for them.” Further, they believed that Valley View was “a place to build confidence for kids” (Faith), and accordingly, club membership “definitely plays into what I guess our aspirations are for them... there’s a lot going on on a daily basis there, that can contribute to their you know, the type of people we want them to be” (Tracy). Overall, confidence is important to these mothers for a variety of reasons, and participation at Valley View can help to build self-esteem in a positive way. Sarah explained that through the pool her children build self-confidence and “feel good about themselves, [and] if they get that part of

them out, so they can then share that, and pass that, I really do believe if you're a happy person than you can then share that in other areas and with other people." Sarah felt that confidence was crucial to her children's happiness, and her family's Valley View membership could facilitate this important form of cultural capital, illustrative of their lived experience of upper-middle class privilege.

The mothers' comments about their children developing confidence are incredibly important to understanding the emphasis these families place on spending their summers at the pool. The very idea of using a private club membership to facilitate children's acquisition of self-confidence is strictly a class-based practice born out of these families ability to harness their capitals to gain access to the cultural field of Valley View. These families' taste and appreciation for their pool membership has brought them together with others sharing the same habitus, and therefore the pool provides a place for family interactions that they believe will yield future benefits. For these upper-income families, the development of a distinct, embodied sense of self-esteem in children is imperative, as confidence is an indicator of their upper-middle class position, and signals an ability to be both successful and determined in later life.

Additionally, upper-middle class parents of swimmers tend to believe that "participation in swimming enhances their children's self-confidence" (Dukes & Coakley, 2002, p. 192), and accordingly, the Valley View mothers promote their children's involvement in pool programs, namely swim team. Sarah felt that swimmers "are very confident people," and explained, in no uncertain terms, "the teams are an amazing way to build self-esteem for the kids, they feel so good about it, they feel very connected,"

they get very “positive feelings” from participation, and “my kids have grown a lot because of it.” Heather remarked about how nice it is to watch “a four year old who feels great because he made it from one end of the pool to another.” This accomplishment, growth, and development, evidenced in a very “tangible” way, as Heather put it, is crucial to children’s self-confidence, and the pool is able to provide this concrete experience of improvement. Tracy said, “I think just being on a swim team has given [the kids] both a lot of self-esteem, you know ‘I can do this, I can do it better, I can do it faster.’” My discussions with the children made it clear that they did in fact develop this embodied disposition through their swimming participation. For example, Anna told me that she liked swimming because “I’m sort of good at it,” and Alex relayed a story to me illustrating how he felt good about himself:

Well I remember from last season divisionals and I finally did it, and I don’t remember who said this, but they said, ‘is that your first time doing breaststroke?’ And I’m like, ‘what do you mean?’ And [they’re] like, ‘doing it right?’ And I’m like, ‘oh my gosh, [yes]!’ And they were just watching me, and I felt so good that my teammates could tell me something that made me feel really good.

Like Alex indicated, many mothers report their children’s confidence is related to dropping time, bettering swim technique, and improving performance. For instance, Nancy told me swimming:

builds up their confidence. Yesterday I was showing, it was so funny, I showed Matt, I have like all the ribbons 2007, 2008, and when I show him his summer of 2009, he was like ‘wow, and I did all that?’ It’s like really really really good for them.

Nancy explains how markers of performance over previous years have helped her son understand his improvement. Similarly, Kristen said that confidence is evidenced in her daughters' swimming and diving at Valley View:

you work hard, you really push yourself at practice and woah, look at the time I shaved off of this event that I'm swimming. The same with dive, you know, work really hard on this element of this dive, and wow my scores went up this week.

Kristen, like others, alludes to the idea that competition has offered a particularly tangible measure of improvement for her children to understand the value of hard work paying off, an important lesson to learn. Lynn explained that her son "is seeing himself improve, and he's conscious of his time ... [and] he told everybody how he shaves seconds off." The mothers recognized how these feelings of accomplishment through swimming promote confidence in their kids.

However, for the mothers it is not about time and speed, rather it is about the *experience* of dropping time and improving skills. For instance, Sarah explained to me that many of her daughters' year round friends are on different teams in better divisions and "have wildly different swim times," yet at Valley View, her kids are still able "to have all the great benefits and good feelings from swimming," regardless of how they may measure up to others, because "a first place ribbon or a second place ribbon is still a first or second." This reward can promote an incredible amount of self-esteem, and the laid back atmosphere at Valley View helps tremendously. Sarah continued to tell me how Valley View's "family friendly, kid-focused orientation" helps build confidence:

because you don't have a coach saying, which I do in soccer, you don't come to practice you won't swim in the meets. We don't have a coach that says, here's your evaluation, these are the skills you have to work on in order to move up to the next level. It's not done in a heavy hitting way, and that makes a really big

difference too, because it's all positive at Valley View. And that's a big piece, because I think if they came home feeling like their coach was upset with them [it would be different].

Overall, the mothers whose children participate in the Valley View teams found them to be an incredible source of self-confidence, as well as a very good combination of skill development, low intensity, and fun during the summer. Ultimately Valley View membership, and general pool participation, provides important, formative experiences for children that help them develop a strong, distinctive, embodied cultural capital.

Life Lessons and the Transmission of Social Class Privilege

In addition to instilling a paramount sense of confidence in their children, the mothers believe that team participation offers important, intangible experiences which work to build their cultural capital. Sarah felt that through the team competition her children understand that working together is part of the goal, and "it's not just all of themselves." She believes this feeling "is hard to create." All of the mothers whose children were involved in teams stressed the values of sportsmanship, life lessons, and personal growth through swim and dive participation. As examples of their children acquiring these values, both Kristen and Sarah explained how their children learned to manage competition against friends:

They also really support each other, I find that that's a nice quality too. When Jenny was really in intense competition last year for dive, she was up against one of her closest friends at the time, you know after coming off a great season to go to that 9-10s where you're [in] stiff competition, she was so supportive, and I love seeing that, because that is a very hard thing. I know, I'm very competitive myself, but to be able to really want your friends to do their best too, and I thought that was great, and I think that exists only because of the nature of it. (Sarah)

Emma had this feeling, had to wrestle with this feeling of this is my teammate and my friend and I'm very happy for her success, but also on the other side, I just want to beat her once, right? But that was a good experience for Emma as frustrating as it was, and actually Emma beat [friend] today in divisionals, which, then on that side of the coin, that was the opportunity of Emma to still be supportive of [friend] and be happy for her own performance, but be a good friend to [friend]. And [friend] wasn't upset at all, I think she was very happy with how she did. But anyway, it gave each kid [a chance] to be happy about their position. (Kristen)

Through the teams, Sarah, Kristen, and others indicate that their children have gained important, invaluable skills, or a set of transferable cultural capitals, that they have not learned elsewhere. These women pointed to Valley View as being a unique experience because the swim team, in particular, is not all that competitive, there are no formal evaluations required to move to the next level, and there is a fun, team-atmosphere generated at the pool that is different than their previous experiences. For example, Tracy told me that among a multitude of intangible life lessons, the pool teaches her kids how to be on a team. Cathy fondly explained that her children get so much more out of their pool membership than their other activities due to the positive, unique team experience:

I think there's a real benefit to learning how to deal with people ... that you learn in team sports because you develop a real ability for how you handle conflict, how you deal with each other, how you encourage people, how you try to bring people along who are less—all of it. And how you are brought along if you're not the star of the team, or if you are the star of the team. But then I also think there is a true benefit to individual sports when it is your own accomplishment and you are truly your own. Although team, you still have to do it for the team. Swim team interestingly encompasses both, more so than I think a lot of other sports, so they have the benefit of, you know, they're improving themselves, their personal bests by their own times and their own races, but they're also helping the team, so it's very important.

Cathy stresses how the pool teaches her son “how to deal with people,” a valuable, experiential cultural capital emblematic of social class status. Tracy also explained that the pool teaches her children “how to deal with adults.” The pool becomes a place where young kids learn techniques of sociability in accordance with their upper-middle class habitus, and gain a sense of entitlement through relations with adults in positions of power, whether they are teenaged lifeguards, adult coaches, or their friends’ parents. Thus Valley View, as a cultural field, provides a distinctive physical space in which both adults and children intermingle, reinforcing and reproducing their embodied, white, social class privilege in and through one and another. Further, interactions at the pool serve as an opportunity for parents to transmit class-based cultural skills to children in an effort to reproduce their social status in the next generation (Bourdieu, 1984).

Summer swimming, particularly in Valley View’s division, “is simultaneously individual and team-oriented” (Beekman, 2009, D-5), an idea which Cathy’s comments above illustrate, and many of the mothers echo:

It also gives them, each of them, one of their first experiences, or one of few at this point in their lives, experiences, being part of a team, and they really learned that, yes your individual performance is important, but, it’s largely important because of what it does for our team at large. And you know, they’ve each had an experience where they’ve not gotten the time they would have wanted, or the score in dive that they would have wanted, but they learned that it still helped their team, you know, that it’s better to—okay they didn’t do as well as they wanted to personally, but whatever they did and earned for Valley View helped our team to do better, win, do whatever. So I think that’s been a good, a good lesson for them. (Kristen)

It carries over, like lessons that you learn as part of being on the swim team, that you can carry in the classroom, that you can carry on another sport, that you can carry on a playdate, you know whatever it may be. I think that there are like fundamental lessons and part of their development that is coming from their involvement in a team sport, but also being individually responsible and that’s

that what I think we love about swimming. Because, you know, you are focused on your time, and you know, your particular skill, or stroke, but it's like the greater good of the team, is also part of your process. (Lynn)

As is characteristic of their habitus, these upper-middle class mothers “stress individualistic achievement within the framework of group cooperation and collective responsibility” (Booth & Loy, 1999, p. 13). Ironically, many of the women indicated that part of the intangible benefit their children gain from team participation is a tangible result. Similar to the others, Elizabeth believed that the tension between swimming as an individual and team sport provides her children with “a satisfaction that you can apply to other things later on in life ... I think it teaches you a whole mentality of how to work with people and how to lose and how to handle it well.” Sabrina, who believes that there are so many different skills that her children can learn from participating on the teams at Valley View, told me that she was walking home with her seven year old son, Gavin, and “he was like I got a fifth and a sixth and I got disqualified, but I’m gonna learn from my mistake.” Sabrina was delighted by this conversation with her son as it illustrates the successful transmission of cultural values. Invaluable life skills, or cultural capitals, such as this type of perseverance and determination, are important upper-middle class character traits for children to acquire. Cathy expressed the same sentiments as she recounted a presentation her son gave at his school about his swimming experience: “he jumps up and says ... I had one first place, you know, matter of fact, and pleased, but he explained to them all the other benefits, and ‘you don’t have to have a first place finish to still have succeeded.’” In telling this story, Cathy, like Sabrina, indicated to me that she was proud her son’s revelation and vindicated that her

family membership at Valley View contributed to teaching her son this valuable lesson about sportsmanship. The mothers believe that team participation has helped their children develop a valuable skill set, and thus multiple forms of useful cultural capital emblematic of their social class privilege. Ultimately, they view swimming as a recreational pursuit that is expressive of their upper-middle class lifestyles, and like soccer for the middle class, is “experienced and advanced as a compelling popular euphemism for both class and race superiority” (Andrews et al., 1997, p. 280). Valley View, as a socially segregated recreational space, offers parents the opportunity to cultivate these important white and upper-middle class cultural capitals in their children, and accordingly, reproduce their social class position.

The mothers, in particular, engineer their familial participation at the pool in such a way that they are able to provide their children with the requisite experiences that will aid in the transmission, conversion, and reproduction of their social class privilege. For example, Heather believes that Valley View is “a great experience for kids” because you “grow up at a place” and there are so many valuable skills you can learn through belonging to the pool and incorporating it in your life. Heather encompasses how much her children learn at the pool when she explained:

[I] feel like the life lessons that my kids have gotten from ... learning to practice, be part of a team, make a commitment, stick with it, become a lifeguard, clean out the bathrooms, chase out the snakes, keep the pump room tidy, be smart about chemicals, I mean there's so many things, so many things—not make a fuss, even from when they're younger, stop fussing about 'oh you broke your goggles,' or 'oh go borrow something out of the lost and found,' you know, things [like] that. Teaching them that not to make a big deal out of little things, and then making a big deal out of things like safety ... those are things that I think make them balanced, well-balanced people.

Overall, these teachable moments that Valley View facilitates are important parenting opportunities where children learn particular values and skills that can reproduce their social class privilege. All the mothers believed, as Heather verbalized, “there’s so many life lessons to be learned” at the pool. For example, Sabrina explained that the pool helps children as “it’s another way to teach them how to play with other kids whether it’s your siblings or strangers.” Nancy recounted an example of her seven year old daughter, Madeline, “helping other kids.” She recalled “that one day she was teaching [girl] how to dive, for me it was awesome, it was like okay this is what I want her to do and it’s nice that they can share ... with other kids.” Kids learn to interact with all different types and ages of people, a practice that is important to their overall upper-middle class growth and development.

Many mothers specifically referenced commitment as an additional life lesson, or cultural capital, that Valley View instills in their children. Rachel, and others, stressed that dedication and loyalty are important in all aspects of life. Heather believed, “once [the kids] make a commitment to something, I make them stick with it.” She went on to say:

when you join a team or you make a commitment to something, or you sign up for something and other people are counting on you, I think that’s something that Gary and I feel strongly about instilling our kids, if you sign up for swim team, you go to those meets, you go to practice, you’ve made a commitment ... I mean there’s so many examples of kids who don’t have the kind of commitment that my kids have.

Similarly, Sabrina told me:

We make [swim team] a priority, because we’re just the kind of people that you make a commitment, you do it. With anything, you know, even if you don’t like it, or you know, you’re tired after camp, you have to go at least three or four

days to swim team. And the meets, like, they're not optional. I'm sorry like one day I said to somebody, where's your brother? 'Oh well my mom wanted to pull the carpet up in his room today'—he was a scratch. She told me that innocently. I was like I find that so irritating.

Like many of the mothers, Tracy explained, “we talk about the commitment to the team. If you are on the team it doesn't mean you can sit home while practice is going on. Like you signed up for the team, you go.” Sarah, like others, happily mentioned that her daughters have gotten to the point where they are driving their participation at Valley View which she thinks is wonderful. These common beliefs about teaching and learning life lessons at the pool, such as commitment, sociability, and sportsmanship, illustrate members feeling a sense of matching with others in the cultural field who subscribe to a similar upper-middle class habitus. One's habitus structures “social encounters, discouraging socially discordant relationships, encouraging well-matched relationships, without these operations ever having to be formulated other than in the socially innocent language of likes and dislikes” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 243). The particular skills and behaviors that children are acquiring at the pool are structured by their upper-middle class habitus and formed through their interactions in the cultural field that is Valley View. Therefore club membership functions as a consumption choice that is an integral component of parents’ “holistic” approach to childrearing which is directed at producing “well-balanced” children. However, this “holistic” approach is created through a socially segregated, white, upper-middle class space where “life lessons,” or cultural capitals, are reinforced in and through others occupying similar privileged identities. Through children’s acquisition of life lessons and particular experiential

cultural capitals, parents are successfully converting, transmitting, and reproducing their social class status in the next generation.

In conclusion, in this chapter I have discussed how the upper-middle class Valley View mothers have enacted their social class privilege to control their children's extra-curricular activity participation. Their motivations are anchored in their "power over necessity" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 256), as they have made a concerted attempt to avoid the over-scheduled nature of middle-class American family life in an effort to gain distinction in their upper-middle class lifestyles. The women believe that their children are entitled to relax, particularly in the summer, and therefore they have worked to implement selected, enriching experiences designed to cultivate their cultural capital and create a "well-balanced" childhood. I argue that the cultural field of Valley View offers one such important physical space for these families, as it provides a unique opportunity for parents to build cultural capital in their children through their experiences at the pool. Specifically, the mothers praise the intangible benefits unique to Valley View, such as the chance to have unstructured, imaginative play time, as well as a safe space which fosters the development of autonomy and independence among the children. Additionally, through pool participation, children are able to gain cultural capital in the form of all-important life lessons, as well as a crucial, class-based, embodied sense of self-confidence, acquired through swim skills, participation on teams, and interactions at the pool. Ultimately I believe that Valley View operates as a distinctive, socially segregated, restricted affiliation for these families, and accordingly,

the cultural capital (and other capitals) children acquire through pool participation is strictly white, and upper-middle class, and thus promotes the transmission, conversion, and reproduction of their familial social class privilege.

Chapter IV: Upper-Middle Class, White, and Privileged:
Detailing the Lived Experience of the Valley View Mothers

Previously mentioned, this research has designated all the families at Valley View, and specifically the families who participated in this project, as upper-middle class. Accordingly, this particular class positioning governs the daily and family lives of the mothers in this research, and is crucial to understanding their practices, beliefs, dispositions, and sensibilities. Bourdieu (1984) describes this structuring system of tastes and preferences contributing to the development of a particular classifiable, class-based lifestyle as habitus. Habitus is embodied, and acquired through the personal understanding one's actual social, cultural, and economic status (Bourdieu, 1977, 1980, 1984). It is the generative formula of lifestyle that "underlie[s] each of the classes of practices and properties," and further, characterizes distinctive lifestyles based on social position (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 255; see also 1984). Bourdieu (1977) does recognize that there are individual differences across social class groupings, however explains that members of the same class will have encountered more similar experiences with each other than they will have with members of a different class, and argues that habitus connects lifestyle practices with social position. Lifestyle is the product of habitus, and becomes a sign indicating distinction, particular social standing, and certain social qualifications (Bourdieu, 1984). It "is a general, transposable disposition which carries out a systematic, universal application—beyond the limits of what has been directly learnt—of the necessity inherent in the learning conditions" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170).

Habitus constructs a world which is “taken for granted” due to the synchronization and reinforcement of similar class-based lifestyle experiences (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 80; see also 1984, 1989).

The information presented thus far has been largely informed by my interactions with the Valley View mothers, and invoking Bourdieu, I have devoted this chapter to understanding their lived experience, as well as the empirical characteristics constituting their upper-middle class habitus. Specifically, the first part of this chapter details how these women's lives are governed by motherhood. They have fostered an “all for the kids” attitude in their role as the primary caretaker of their children, an outlook which mediates their occupational and family labor, as well as their volunteer efforts. Additionally, the following describes how these women experience leisure and the importance they place on fitness. I argue that their lifestyles and day to day responsibilities have the unintentional consequence of reproducing their gendered behavior, and further, are demonstrative of their habitus. The second half of this chapter describes the way in which these women have appropriated Valley View into their lived summer reality. In particular, they utilize their membership as an escape from domestic isolation, a way to experience a sense of belonging, and an opportunity for relaxation. However, through their pool membership, the women again reinforce gender inequality, as well as unconsciously engage in social segregation, practices which I believe are emblematic of their class-based sensibilities, and thus, their habitus.

“It’s all for the kids”: Women’s Occupational and Family Labor

The 20 mothers who participated in this research are intelligent, educated, and successful women who lead busy lives filled with their careers and their families. Through my engagement with these women and interactions in the field, I learned that their lives are both complicated and unique, and that as the mother of the family, they subscribe to the role, as Sabrina put it, “the driver of the family,” maintaining everything from relationships to schedules. Yet regardless of their status in the labor force, the majority of these mothers have help in the form of housekeepers and babysitters, luxuries afforded to them by, and illustrative of, their social class privilege. However, even with hired help, these women’s day to day existences are governed by the responsibility for the bulk of the family labor, including child care; scheduling, planning, and coordinating all family members and their associated activities; household management tasks such as groceries, errands, clothes, and cleaning; and in many cases, their careers. This finding echoes earlier research that reports women often take sole responsibility for managing their daily and family lives, navigate the logistics associated with their carework, as well as share the burden of supporting their family financially (Arendell, 1999, 2000; Descartes, Kottak, & Kelly, 2007; Firestone & Shelton, 1994). Consequently motherhood, a patriarchal construction, is often defined by women’s labor on behalf of their families (Arendell, 1999).

Of the 20 women interviewed, all have college degrees and 15 hold advanced degrees. Seven are full-time homemakers, while the other 13 work part-time in professional occupations such as lawyers, accountants, and administrators. All women

had worked full-time prior to having children, but none alluded to the idea that they had wanted to continue to work full-time, nor that their husband might alter his employment to take on a caretaker role once they became parents. Five of the 13 employed mothers currently work part-time from home, a practice that often renders women's occupations and financial contributions invisible (Arendell, 2000). In sum, this essentially means that 12 of the 20 women interviewed are able to be home full-time to attend to their familial needs, adjusting their careers and commitments around what works best for their family. Generally, family history and traditional beliefs, educational attainment, and social location shape family decisions to have the woman perform the role as homemaker (Gerson, 2004; Giele, 2008). Further, long commutes, such as those of the Valley View fathers, tend to impact the employment choices made by couples (Descartes et al., 2007; Giele, 2008). Accordingly, all 20 Valley View families made the choice to position the woman in the role of primary caretaker, forcing her to adjust her status in the labor force to meet her familial obligation, and thus inadvertently reproducing gender inequality. Illustrating this, Lynn, a part-time working mother who does not work from home, explained:

I wouldn't be able to have like a 9-5 desk job, because that just wouldn't work for our family, because I need to be available ... so I'm able to kind of control my own schedule with the idea that you know, like I can move it around and I can make it work for the boys, I can make it work for me.

Lynn's flexible schedule helps her manage her family life, however, like many of the other Valley View mothers, she very fortunate to be in a professional part-time job as they are often hard to come by and not all employers are accommodating. The advanced education, slightly later age these women had their first child (average age of

31), and types of professions they are in, lend themselves to this part-time, flex-time schedule. In addition, many times the mothers' supplemental income supports extras such as children's activities and vacations, for instance, Cathy told me, echoing Descartes et al. (2007), "if we didn't have my salary I'm not sure we could afford all of it." Therefore, working part-time directly relates to these women's upper-middle class status as it affords them both extra income as well as time to devote to mothering. It is a lifestyle feature which allows them to exercise more control over their lives, and in turn, contributes to their relative privilege and power.

All participants in this research appear to be in stable marriages, however, they do not rely on their husbands to handle many household or childcare responsibilities. The women explain, matter-of-factly and supportively, without any trace of resentment, that their husbands work very long hours and some travel quite a bit, and therefore the role of primary caregiver, regardless of their own status in the labor force, is left to them⁹. There is an implicit understanding on the part of these women that their husband's work schedule is the anticipated norm providing their family the economic capital necessary to function in this type of privileged environment. They acknowledge the competitive nature of the area in which they live, and appear to view their husband's occupation as a status symbol, and their own family management as a sign of moral worth. For example, Barb proudly and supportively explained that her husband, Raymond, a business owner, had to work incredibly long hours, even sleeping at his

⁹ It is not my aim to demean the role the fathers have in these families' lives. In fact, without exception, over the course of my field work I found all of them to be very involved, caring, and committed parents.

office four nights in a row, in order to take off a week to go to the beach with his family.

Similarly, Heather told me of her husband's demanding schedule at his law firm:

there have been many times in our lives when the kids were growing up when Gary didn't make it to a dance recital, or something at school, lots and lots of things. Back to school nights, all kinds of things ... I always joke that people during the school year, they never see Gary, they think I'm a single mom!

Almost all the women had similar stories about their husband's hours at the office, and many even reflected about how they have wanted to do particular social activities in the evenings, such as a women's tennis league at Valley View, book club, or neighborhood BUNKO¹⁰ night with friends, but due to their husband's work schedules, they do not participate. In many ways the Valley View fathers take on a role that is "tangential to family life," as the women arrange their lives and schedules without considering the men's involvement (Descartes et al., 2007, p. 172). While this speaks to the autonomy and control the women have over their family lives, it also leaves them little freedom as their lived experience involves never-ending demands on their time.

Accordingly, the mothers, regardless of whether they are working outside the home, are in charge of family logistics, including the scheduling of children's activities. This finding is in accordance with other research that indicates mothers are primarily in charge of the daily and custodial care of children, including managing children's extra-curricular pursuits (Arendell, 1999, 2000; Craig, 2006; Lareau, 2000, 2003). Faith explained that her husband "sort of gets his overall perspective on things, but he is definitely not involved in the signing up frenzy for all the different things." Tracy also

¹⁰ BUNKO is a dice game often played by suburban women as a regularly scheduled social activity. Players take turns hosting this event at their home, a task that normally includes providing food, drinks, and prizes for all attendees (Ginger, n.d.).

said that she is “the primary person who signs them up for everything.” However, signing up for activities is only the beginning of their responsibility as made clear through a conversation I documented in my field notes with Lynn at the pool:

Prior to Evan’s lesson today I was talking with Lynn. She told me that Evan qualified for the winter team that he had been hoping to make ... she then proceeded to tell me she was a little nervous about him doing this winter team because she didn’t know how she was going to get him to practice if it was twice a week, and what she was going to do with Eddie [her younger son]. She talked about the logistics a little bit, which didn’t concern me at all, but I just let her go with it. At some point while she was explaining their schedules to me she said, and ‘then on Sunday, I can either take Eddie and leave Evan home with Mike [her husband/their dad], or take Evan, and leave Eddie home with Mike, or take both of them and leave Mike home to relax.’ I found it curious that she was already making mention of their fall schedule, and the fact that on a Sunday she knew she would definitely have to drive one or both of the boys somewhere and Mike would automatically be staying home ... this is another example of how the moms at Valley View seem to control and organize their families.

Not only do the mothers coordinate the organization of family life, but they are also the parent responsible for transportation to and from activities and school, again tasks they could not perform if they were working full-time in the same capacity as their spouses. For example, Elizabeth said, “I drive a lot, this year has been a crazy driving year,” and she repeated these sentiments throughout our interview as well as on many different occasions when I spoke with her at the pool. Nancy echoed this idea, as well as prior research on mother’s family labor, when she said, “I always say, ‘I’m a lawyer in the morning and I’m a chauffeur in the afternoon’” (cf. Descartes et al., 2007; Thompson, 1999). Mothers often view the time they devote to transportation as a “symbol of maternal care,” and evidence that they are ‘good mothers’ as time in the car can allow for additional monitoring and interaction (Descartes et al., 2007, p. 169). Descartes et al., (2007, p. 162) further argues, “daily driving patterns ... are framed by intertwining

threads of class, gender, and place.” The ability to drive to activities not only demonstrates women’s concerted effort to locate and enroll children in enriching extracurricular pursuits, but it also allows them to design and control the specific, appropriate, upper-middle class experiences they want their children to have. However, women chauffeuring children around while men work higher paying jobs reproduces “unequal social and familial gender relationships” (Descartes et al., 2007, p. 175). I believe the overall labor the Valley View mothers perform for their family unintentionally demonstrates patterns of gendered behavior to children, and further, is a naturalized component of their upper-middle class habitus.

Often during our discussions, the women would claim sole responsibility for their child caretaking role, following the rhetoric of “being a mom is the most important job I have.” In particular, the non-working mothers were vocal regarding the importance of their job as homemaker being about giving their time to their children. Heather very bluntly stated, “obviously ... as a non-working parent, your life revolves around your kids, I mean, that’s why I’m home. If I didn’t have them, I’d work.” Heather’s statement, ignoring the economic privilege allowing her to stay home full-time, but maintain her upper-middle class status on one income, indicates that her children are her number one priority. Similarly Margaret explained:

They’re my kids, they’re my children, and this is life. We’re together. I stopped working, I used to be a trader, a foreign exchange trader, traded dollar market options, in Japan and Germany ... But I stopped all that, and now I’m doing this, it’s my life, I take care of my kids, we have fun, I take care of the house, it’s my job right now.

She continued to tell me, “it’s all for them. We go out. We buy fun things. It’s always for them. The right food, the right activities, the right environment.” Like the other moms, Margaret alludes to a tension in her life regarding her status in the labor force, and therefore has committed all her time and energy to her children, taking on the job of mom so that her kids are raised correctly, meaning, with the “right” everything. These comments illustrate the taken for granted way that these upper-middle class mothers have used the privileges at their disposal to regulate their children’s upbringing. Further, even the working mothers subscribed to the same child-centric approach as evidenced by Lynn’s description of her work schedule:

I work my schedule around them ... I work around from drop off to pick up, and then it’s their time. ... And after I drop them off, I do my work stuff. I do geriatric social work, so I do home visits, and I have an office at [city], so sometimes I usually start there and get what I need and go on my visits, and basically work with like the idea that hopefully I’ll end 45 minutes to an hour earlier so that I can do the grocery [shopping] or the laundry or return something before picking them up. And then when I pick them up, it’s all about them. And so it really doesn’t change for the school year, I’m basically working or doing like the errands that need to be done, that they’re no longer able to happily come with and it’s not worth it. So once they get to school, that’s my cluster of time, and then once school ends, you know, I’m theirs. So it’s like 20 to 25 hours a week of my billable hours, but I could be eating bon bons and getting my nails and toes painted as far as they’re concerned, you know? Because I’m totally available once they’re present, so I just, I kinda cram as much as I can into the day so I don’t have to do anything other than deal with their needs when they’re home.

Like many of the women, Lynn’s explanation of her day includes the effort to make sure that everything is fun and for her kids when they are around, rather than having to drag them on errands, behaviors which contribute to the invisibility of her family labor (Chafetz & Kotarba, 1995; Thompson, 1999). Overall, the women’s attitude towards their ‘mom’ role “permeates their identity,” and has implications on their relationships,

behaviors, and interactions with others (Giele, 2008, p. 405). Lynn's schedule is tailored to her mom role, and her comment indicates that her children are not really aware of her work schedule, thus signifying that her career takes a backseat to her family. For the most part, all the mothers are available when their children are home, regardless of their occupation, a pattern of behavior which, again, demonstrates and reproduces women's gendered roles as nurturers and caretakers. Further, this control over their lives is emblematic of their lived experience of privilege, as it illustrates the way they have harnessed their class-based power to create their own reality.

Some of the women discussed their difficult decision to work or not work once they had children, but not once did they mention their husbands considering sharing more of the domestic burden. Lauren told me, "I really wanted to be active, socially and to make my brain work from day to day ... so I really—it is very important to me to work." She explained that she had a job with a company in the city, but her husband's business was expanding and he needed her help with it. She said it took her a long time to leave her job for the family business position because she really valued the act of going to work and the autonomy that comes with having a job. Many mothers continue to struggle with this decision, for example I documented a conversation with Reilly in my field notes:

I wish I could work, and we fight about it you know, just the normal husband and wife marriage stuff, but it's just so annoying. I tell him I want to work, but I know I can't, and he knows I can't. I mean when Avery was little I worked and James would have to leave work to get her at day care, but he can't really do that now, and I couldn't leave in the middle of a shift, so I don't work. I mean I work on the weekends sometimes, but I don't want to work more than that because the weekends are family time. It's the only time we can all be together.

While Reilly's heartfelt remarks certainly speak to a very real tension between her children and former career as a full-time nurse, like the rest of the mothers, they do not acknowledge her relative class position which affords her the opportunity to stay home. She mentions that she could work on weekends, however she would miss "family time," something she is not willing to sacrifice. If Reilly wanted to, she could work more and find accommodating childcare, but she is exercising her social class privilege by being selective about when she works. Much like the others, Stephanie reflects in an uncertain way about her decision to be a full-time homemaker with her three children after getting her Ph.D.:

I definitely miss the intellectual stimulation a little bit ... So it's a bit of a, it's a mixed bag. There are definitely times I like envy friends who are going to work, and there are days I'd say are just like—when things are just not going well. Certain days I certainly don't enjoy it. Days I might think the kids would be better off if I was working for whatever reason, I'm just tired or snapping at them or something. But I'd say overall I'm happy, and, I don't think I regret it, as long as I do go back ... I ran into someone in [the city] from my lab, and they said, you know, he said, that he and our advisor were talking and they actually said that they would've never thought that I would be at home, and it made me feel a little sad, because I was like I would've never thought that either, but here I am, and it's funny how these things happen. And I'm happy, but then part of me is like, I was like all that stuff I did seems ... (trails off)

Stephanie's conflicted comments, along with many of the other women's sentiments, resonate with Rubin's (2007) finding that women who have more education, experience greater tension between their desire for a career versus their family responsibility. Similarly, Zimmerman (2000) reports that women who stay home found that they received societal messages leading them to believe they are wasting their education, which adds to their uneasiness about being a homemaker. Along the same lines, Rachel mentioned to me that she had her MBA and a high powered job before she had kids,

but she received a lot of pressure from her extended family to stay home. After having her second child she decided to stay home full-time. Rachel illustrates this apprehension through recounting a discussion with her son:

[The kids] used to think for a while that women didn't work, because I was at home and they'd never seen me working, I worked part-time when [my son] was born because my mother-in-law watched them three days a week. We went somewhere, and he asked, 'where's so and so,' and I was like, 'she's at work,' and he's like, 'women work?' And he was like four years old when he said that, and I am a huge feminist and I was [like], 'oh my God, yes women work, what did mommy do?!' I did my MBA, and so many—you just don't think about it—I'll kind of make it a point to tell [them], I don't know if it was the right thing to do, but mommy quit because [of] you guys, and you're my number one priority.

Rachel is like many other liberal feminists that have decided to stay home because they felt it was the best choice for their family (Pescowitz, 2005; Villani, 1997). However, while Rachel may consider herself a feminist, it appears to be more ideological than practical, as her decision to stay home and cater to her children illustrates her participation in the reproduction of patriarchal relations. In her re-telling of this incident, she does not implicate her husband's full-time employment in her homemaker status, or suggest that they discussed the option of him staying home. Rachel, like others, boasts a façade of feminism, yet is complicit in the reproduction of traditional gendered roles for women. This behavior has had clear repercussions on her children's social development as they have unconsciously acquired a particular understanding about mothering and a woman's place in family life. This division of labor develops embodied and "durable gendered dispositions" (Silva, 2005, p. 92), recreated through the family as these mothers continue to perform their gender-appropriate feminine role consisting of household maintenance and custodial care of children. This behavior

contributes to the construction of gendered dispositions in children as the home provides one of their earliest learning experiences and tends to reproduce traditional biological and social relationships (Bourdieu, 1977, 1996; Chafetz & Kotarba, 1995). Overall, “the activities involved in being mothers and bringing up children can be understood as performative of race, class and gender” (Byrne, 2006, p. 1001), and the white, upper-middle class Valley View mothers largely ignore their privilege, yet draw on their circumstances to exercise greater control over their lives in order to conserve, transform, and reproduce their respective class power (Bourdieu, 1984). Further, as argued in previous chapters, these women’s class status is converted and transmitted in and through their children, reproducing their class position in the next generation. I believe these daily practices represent the empirical characteristics of these women’s lived experience, and further, are a salient feature of their habitus.

Advocacy-based volunteering

The women’s homemaker status, or part-time work commitments, offer them the time to engage in volunteer pursuits, an additional element of their daily and family lives contributing to their class status. Mothers who are highly involved in their children’s activities tend to have flexible schedules and either work part-time or not at all as they need time and energy to devote to their efforts (McGrath & Kuriloff, 1999). The Valley View mothers report committing time to volunteer on behalf of their children, however, with rare exceptions, they are not engaged in any activities that are independent of their children or that they might continue once their children are grown. In particular, white, upper-middle class mothers often spend the most time volunteering

in Girl Scouts and the schools system (Freeman, 2004; Langman, 1987; McGrath & Kuriloff, 1999). Accordingly, the majority of the mothers I spoke with explained that they are active in their children's schools and/or with the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), multiple mothers are Girl Scout troop leaders, and many note their husbands as active with Boy Scouts. Further, Lila is the coach of her daughter's soccer team, and Tracy's husband, Jim, coaches both their son and daughter's soccer teams. Also, some families that have an active religious affiliation note minimal service work through that. Cathy, a lawyer whose part-time work constitutes close to 40 hours per week, offers a notable exception, not only for the comparative amount of time she spends at her office, but also the explanation that her family walks for the ALS foundation each year, she has extensive responsibilities at work over and above her position, volunteers with her church, and sits on a school board for a school that her children do not even attend. Incidentally, she is the only person who expressed remorse that her family did not do more, and mentioned she would like them to volunteer at a soup kitchen.

Through my interviews with the mothers, it became clear that there is an interesting relationship between volunteering and acting as their child's advocate in some way. Messner (2009) explains that often women's labor is not all for the kids, rather "it's about the parent's (usually the *mom's*) sense of self-importance and her attempt to elevate her child to a position of public prominence" (p. 186, emphasis in original). In many cases it appeared as though the volunteer work that the mothers do is specifically designed to put them in a position to better advocate for their children or to garner something on their behalf. Illustrating this idea, Sarah confessed:

it will be helpful if Jenny sticks with [Girl Scouts] for another year because then they have community service, and as the scout leader I can sign off on community service hours, and the scout projects they do can count towards it. Rather than like, I know some other friends have had to find like jobs for their kids and drive them to those jobs. It would really—[if] we could knock out three years of community service in one year of scouts it would be amazing, and then I could care less. Because I see how much time it adds on to these kids' schedule, they get like an hour here or there, which is the frustrating part, it's like go to you know, a school event and help out with this, but you have to get there, you have to be there for an hour, and then you come home, and you get an hour, you know? So I love the idea that I could give a potential big chunk [of community service hours] to what we do. Because we do way more than that now—that's my main motivation at this point.

Without even batting an eye, Sarah matter-of-factly reveals that her volunteer time is personally motivated as she is using her position as a Girl Scout troop leader in order to facilitate her daughter's acquisition of community service hours, rather than to help the people/organizations her volunteer efforts might be benefiting. She illustrates a selfish and shallow mentality in that she is trying to get her daughter publically recognized for her service work, without actually performing much service. Sarah's statement demonstrates the idea of upper-middle class power and the unconscious lived experience of privilege as she discusses her technique to navigate institutional rules. Through her position she is able to exercise control over her own life as well as that of her children, and actively takes steps to ensure the successful reproduction of her familial status. Yet in no way does she acknowledge her advantaged situation, nor reference the fact that she is teaching her daughter a lesson that is the virtual antithesis of community service.

Rachel revealed similar motivations for her volunteer efforts when she explained to me that the reason she volunteers on the school board is "because your voice goes

unheard, and I want it to be heard, and then if I'm on the board, I can make it happen, and I made a couple things happen." She told me she was able to get approval to hold a dance at the elementary school and constructed a school-related website. Additionally, Rachel explained that she felt her seven year old daughter had a "flair" for drama, yet the school did not have a program, so "I brought the drama class to school ... I was like why isn't there drama, there should be for this age, so I brought that in." Rachel and Sarah, like other moms, believe that it is important to volunteer in the classroom so that teachers know who the parents are, and so that the parents can monitor what their children are doing. Mothers often think they are judged on their children's school performance and therefore take responsibility for helping them make the most of their education (Arendell, 1999). Mothers, not fathers, are involved in their children's school, and consequently they reproduce both their gendered roles as well as their social class position as they employ their economic, social, and cultural resources on behalf of their children (Lareau, 2003; Reay, 2005). Schools, as classed and raced institutions, can offer children and families valuable social and cultural capital, and therefore parents intervene to ensure their children's ultimate success (Bourdieu, 1984; Byrne, 2006; Freeman, 2004; Lareau, 2003; Reay, 2005). Accordingly, I believe the Valley View mothers' emphasis on *advocacy-based volunteering* is an integral component of their gendered, white, upper-middle class lives, and further, is a salient feature of their habitus.

In all families, whether they acknowledge it or not, the mothers act as advocates for their children. Some, like Rachel and Sarah, do it through formal channels disguised

as volunteering, and others do it informally through day to day mothering and social interactions. For example, Sabrina told me that the reason she did not want to move to a new house across town was because she felt it was important to keep her son in his current school:

And especially as the mother, you work on those relationships, you build those relationships every year, so I could do it again, [yes] but do I want to? [no] ... Because he's mainstreamed, he has special needs, but he's in a regular classroom because I pushed for him to be out of Special Ed, and I was like why can't he just go to our neighborhood school? Because again, I know people, I think people are kinder to him, you feel more a part of the community that your kid is in if you live in the neighborhood than if your kid is shipped to Special Ed somewhere on a bus. I don't know those people, and you're never really gonna meet them, [maybe] at the occasional Halloween party or something. Whereas, when he goes to school, he goes on the bus with [neighbor] and with other kids who I'm friendly with the moms, and even if they're not gonna be his best friend, they're gonna look out for him because they know his family.

Sabrina explained to me that she worked hard to cultivate the relationships she had with the teachers and staff at her son, Brian's school through her continued presence. Though she is not going in to his classroom on a daily basis to do things for him, she has engineered a situation in which he is taken care of. Sabrina strongly believes that as a mother "you're there to be your kid's advocate if they need it but, empower your kid to be as independent as possible." While she speaks to teaching her children to be able to handle themselves on their own, she denies the fact that she has given them the tools to do so as she works hard to put them in situations where they feel empowered and safe, and are therefore able to be independent. Sabrina exercises her class-based power and authority to shape her children's lives. Her actions not only demonstrate her confidence, entitlement, and privilege, but also help her conserve, transform, and reproduce her upper-middle class status in and through her children.

Overall, way in which the mothers, like Sarah, Rachel, and Sabrina, navigate institutional rules to engage in advocacy-based labor on behalf of their children demonstrates an embodied “‘natural’ self-confidence, ease and authority of someone who feels authorized,” behavior which marks exposure to particular distinctive class experiences during their own formative years (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 252; see also 1977), as well as from expertise gained in their present or former lives as career women (Messner, 2009). Further, women's volunteerism often contributes to the reproduction traditional gender ideologies (Messner, 2009; Petrzalka & Mannon, 2006). I believe this type of behavior is a marker of these women's gendered upper-middle class habitus as their intervention in their children's lives enables them to transmit and reproduce their social class privilege in and through their children. Additionally the mothers desire to seek out volunteer and advocacy opportunities to increase their children's performance and potential, serves to shape their community into a place that others want their “children to grow up in” (Messner, 2009, p. 191). Ultimately, these advocacy-based volunteer practices operate as a mechanism of boundary maintenance as these women work to advance their class-based values and attitudes through the status project that is their children. The mothers' volunteer efforts are not community projects benefitting those less fortunate, rather, disguised as service work, they are designed as are investments in their children's futures. Their volunteer practices appeared to be finite, directly corresponding to their current lifestyles as mothers to impressionable, young children.

Women's Leisure: Embodying the Upper-Middle Class Habitus

With a myriad of responsibilities, including volunteer, occupational, and household labor, as well as custodial care of children, all of the women explained to me that they did not have very much leisure time in their day to day lives. Their comments echo leisure researchers' findings that women do not have that much free time due to their multiple responsibilities (Henderson & Dialeschki, 1991). Yet, higher household incomes are associated with more leisure time activities (Firestone & Shelton, 1994). The mothers listed a variety of activities that they do for leisure including: sewing, painting, crafts, running errands on their own without the kids, walking the dog, going to the movies, personal care (such as haircuts, manicures, etc.), tennis, hiking, gardening, walking, reading, cooking, working out, and yoga. However, in our interviews, they noted that they have little opportunity for time alone, although most can count on a little free time to themselves each day, even if it's just, as Cathy joked, "the car ride." Many women follow Margaret's position that leisure is "hard to get right now, I am very, I take care of the children myself ... for me right now [it's] a treasure to have a few minutes just to myself." Along the same lines, Barb confessed:

Once in a while I go to a movie by myself, once in a blue moon. When I'm really, when I feel like my husband hasn't been around to help, and the kids have kinda burned me out over a weekend, and I'll be like, 'okay, Monday I'm going to a movie.' I just go to comedies, something light, I don't want anything intense, I just want to sit and veg out and not think about anything for two hours.

For Barb, treating herself to a movie constitutes her escape. Lauren told me that her leisure time is either when she is taking tennis lessons or the occasional facial, manicure, or pedicure. And Cathy expressed again how much the women do to keep their

households running, and that responsibility, added to her job constraints, factors into her lack of free time:

No my down time, my true leisure time, I take about a half hour before I go to bed to read the newspaper, and that is the time that I would say I'm truly off, and I'm not running around doing laundry or cooking or grocery shopping or going to the drycleaners, or taking people to the doctors or answering questions at work, things like that. But you know, because of the way the world is now and all the electronics, I mean I always check my email before I go to bed, and invariably, something has come up, and you know in many ways, that's not good.

Further, Elizabeth explained that just watching the kids play out in the yard can be leisurely for her as it is downtime where she isn't worrying about the house or driving somewhere. Elizabeth's home has an indoor pool, and during one winter over the course of this research I was teaching private swimming lessons to Elizabeth's and Reilly's children at this pool, and was witness to the idea that just watching children while not actively parenting can be relaxing. In my field notes, I documented that these mothers each drank a beer poolside during the kids' swim lesson in the late afternoon. The luxury of having a pool in your own home and someone to watch your children while enjoying an adult beverage certainly represents exclusive behavior. However, it became clear through my interactions with many of these mothers that they did not recognize their relative advantaged position. Regardless of their perception of the amount of leisure time they have, these women's comments serve as examples of their, albeit unconscious, lived experience of class-based privilege. As upper-middle class, white, educated women, with disposable income and access to transportation and an array of leisure opportunities, they have more control and authority over their own lives and hence greater access to free-time activities (Deem, 1986).

Interestingly, all of the mothers spoke as if they were entitled to their leisure time, a finding which contradicts most leisure researchers' reports that many mothers do not feel like they deserve free time, and tend to feel guilty about taking time away from their family responsibilities (Daly, 1996; Harrington & Dawson, 1995; Henderson & Allen, 1991; Henderson & Dialeschki, 1991). However, participation in the labor force is an impetus for both women's entitlement and their leisure time, and women who work part-time appear to have it best as their work tends to augment their self-esteem, but their hours leave them feeling less constrained and frantic (Deem, 1986; Harrington & Dawson, 1995; Henderson & Dialeschki, 1991). Further, economic capital allows women to engage in leisure time as they have the financial freedom to hire home and child care (Freeman, Palmer, & Baker, 2006). The Valley View mothers fit into this category as their professional schedules are designed to mesh with their family life, and they have the resources to enable them to take time for themselves. Leisure time can be an excellent way to balance responsibilities, reinvigorate women, and contribute to the maintenance of their "sense of self" (Dialeschki & Michener, 1994, p. 69).

Without exception, the mothers valued their personal fitness and discussed it in the context of their leisure time. Five of the 20 women interviewed have gym equipment in their own home and work out regularly there. Eleven of the 20 hold a formal gym membership and report both using it often and enjoying this time. The remaining four mothers do not have home gym equipment or a formal membership, yet explain that sometimes they go to take classes at local gyms or run or walk outside regularly. Faith explains, as many other mothers claim, that "if I did have leisure time,

I'd probably go exercise." Similarly, almost all of the women note that the working out constitutes their personal time:

"[The] gym everyday is my leisure time, because I leave the kids with the babysitting [and] do dancing and all kinds of stuff, that's when I'm myself, so I have that, an hour and half everyday, which is great, and I do what I like."
(Margaret)

[The gym] does feel like a little bit of me time that I can definitely count on getting. (Stephanie)

The gym is my personal leisure time, because I drag the kids there, and I feel like it's the one thing I do for myself. (Reilly)

Admitting that they perceive themselves to have very little free time, the women describe exercise and physical activity as their number one priority in the use of this time. This finding is in accordance with previous research that indicates individuals with more education, higher incomes, and elevated social status exercise more and participate in a wide range of physical activities (Ball et al., 2006; Grzywacz & Marks, 2001; Warde, 2006). Overall, women have healthier lifestyles than men as they tend to eat healthier foods, drink alcohol and smoke less, seek preventative medical care, and exercise more (Ball et al., 2006; Cockerham, 2000, 2005; Denton & Walters, 1999).

Further, this emphasis on fitness, particularly as it constitutes these women's leisure time, is important given that even the most insignificant details of corporeal representation reveal how people treat and relate to their bodies thereby demonstrating their distinctive social position (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984; Shilling, 1991). I believe this philosophy is characteristic of their particular embodied upper-middle class habitus and emphasis on a healthy lifestyle. Bourdieu describes habitus as involving "a culturally specific relation to one's body," as one's habitus is incorporated into their

bodily disposition (Stempel, 2005, p. 418; see also Bourdieu, 1984, 1985a). Habitus is made clear through a class-based “relation to the body at its deepest and most unconscious level, i.e. body schema, which is the depository of a whole world view and a whole philosophy of the person and the body” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 218). Therefore the body serves as a social product and can be utilized and modified in order to garner distinction through fitness (as well as make-up, hairstyle, etc.). Often middle class mothers do not work out unless it is part of a family activity as their main concern generally centers on their commitment to their children, and they prioritize children’s activities ahead of their own (MacDonald et al., 2004; Rosenfeld & Wise, 2000; Swanson, 2009a). Conversely, higher income women, particularly those who are employed, make fitness a priority, setting aside time in their schedule specifically dedicated to physical activity (Ball et al., 2006; Warde, 2006), and the Valley View mothers did in fact explain to me that they managed to squeeze in a workout regardless of their busy schedules. The women believe that it is important to demonstrate these healthy practices to children, for instance, Tracy said, “hopefully we are instilling some good habits into our children from what we do. I think Jim and I set a decent example because we are both working out all the time, so being physically healthy is important.” Barb hoped that her “actions are showing [her kids] [that the pool] is a healthy thing and it’s something good to do.” The mothers’ focus on health and fitness demonstrates their desire to cultivate embodied capital, or “external wealth converted into an integral part of the person, into a habitus,” in order to position their body as a distinctive social product (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 245). Women from the dominant class tend to believe “in

the value of beauty and the value of the effort to be beautiful, and so associating aesthetic value and moral value, they feel superior both in the intrinsic, natural beauty of their bodies and in the art of self-embellishment” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 206). Thus, while they insist they have little free time, the women place a great deal of importance on being fit and healthy, and therefore I consider making time to pursue this goal to be a distinctive marker of their embodied upper-middle class habitus. These Valley View mothers express their unconscious lived experience of privilege through their classed bodies, which illustrates not only their investment in their health, but also their corporeal control, and moral and cultural superiority.

Valley View and the Upper-Middle Class Habitus

The previous pages have detailed practices which I believe to be integral to the daily lifestyles of the Valley View mothers', and thus emblematic of their upper-middle class habitus. Universally the women report that their husbands are the main breadwinner, and in almost all the families, along with this role comes extremely long hours and sometimes extensive travel, and consequently they are alone frequently. As a way to compensate for the demands on their spouses, their lives involve either staying home full-time or engaging in part-time work, the management of almost all household family labor, and the role as the main parent responsible for childrearing. None of these women appeared to resent either their husband's work or their own family labor; however this behavior operates to reproduce embodied gendered dispositions as well as their social class privilege in and through their children. During our discussions, it became clear that an important element of these women's lived experience of privilege

involves ritually going to the pool during the summer with their children. Accordingly, the remaining sections in this chapter will discuss how Valley View offers the mothers a way to get out of the house, a comfortable, private place where they feel they belong, and a distinctive opportunity to experience a sense of leisure time. I argue that the practice of attending Valley View regularly during the summer months is a constitutive feature of these women's habitus.

Escaping Domestic Isolation

The Valley View mothers' feelings of domestic isolation are very apparent both in our interviews and informal conversations at the pool. For example, this theme of solitude was made obvious before my interview with Elizabeth as she warned me that she had a friend who would be coming over before we finished up who "needed to escape her house." Likewise, Rachel told me that she feels trapped in her house with two young kids and is always searching for an outlet. Words like trapped, escape, and outlet were common with these women who were explaining their role as mothers to young kids. However, feelings of domestic isolation and tensions about their role in the labor force were lessened by participation at Valley View. For example, Stephanie said to me, "I was actually thinking it is great being able to take them to the pool in the afternoons and have that opportunity ... There's something special in the summer, it would hard if you wished you could be home more." Stephanie indicates her role as a mother is validated because she is able to offer her children the experience of Valley View in the summer. Similarly, both Sabrina and Margaret describe being able to fit the pool into their schedule as "gift" they are giving their kids and something they believe to

be very important. Comments such as these were common, and many women explained how Valley View is significant in offering them a reprieve from their domestic solitude in the summer. For instance, Reilly, who works as a nurse on some weekends, yet considers herself a stay-at-home mother, discussed how the pool offers her time during the most tedious hours of her day to get out of the house and entertain her children:

Oh, I just—I really love the summer, and hope for the summer to come, because it gives us, I mean the times that I go in the afternoon are the most boring times of the day for a stay-at-home mother, the 4-6 [pm] hours are just so boring. You know, you’ve already done your errands, play time, you just had nap time, it’s before dinner, it’s just hard to occupy that time, so being able to just go relax at the pool and have them play, and I just look forward to that. I look forward to it all year round. I see the pool, and I’m like, ah, so nice!

Specifically, the ability to go to the pool and spend time there offers the women some relief from their responsibilities, or an “escape,” as Cathy labeled it. Sabrina remarked that being able to go to the pool and be involved in the Valley View community, “makes my life nicer.” Rachel said that the pool is a perfect outlet for her kids as it is a way to get out of the house and have social interaction. Margaret also spoke of the pool making her life more fun:

I’ve [gotten] to know them, and it’s so easy ... because you’re standing there with a child, and I have other moms by me who are the same way, and that was a great thing, because I know many moms that way. They are watching the kid, the small child, and we can talk to each other, the child is splashing, and we pass our time because we are bored to death just looking at our children ... it’s much more fun.

Margaret, Reilly, and others, expressed their boredom with their domestic life and reported using the pool as a way to combat these feelings of isolation during the summer. While it was clear to me that these mothers were speaking very honestly and

candidly about their personal feelings, they again fail to recognize the regimes of class-based power and privilege that have afforded them their position. Though they do get bored at home, they are very fortunate to have the luxury of transportation, disposable income, and access to leisure activities to offer them a break. And further, they are privileged to be able to stay home with their children and still maintain their upper-middle class position.

Many women spoke about how the pool provides easier entertainment for their children and can offer them the opportunity to relax at the same time. For instance, Lauren told me that taking care of her kids is less difficult at the pool because they have fun and they “do not bother you.” Lynn said that she finds the pool to be a “nice break” because she can be “outside of my mom role and have a conversation,” explaining that she believes she does get “more social time during the summer than during any other time.” Sarah, like others, explained that “it constantly feels like you’re picking up and dropping off, but then end of the day doesn’t feel that way because it’s all of our activities, because we just all hop in [and] go to the pool.” It’s clear that the pool does in fact provide a break for mothers, as well as a good place to wind down, have fun, and function in their own social circles.

However, again, these women’s reports of domestic isolation indicate that they are constantly performing their gendered mom role involving childcare. These women’s young children view their mothers, not fathers, as the parent to facilitate their pool experience and rely on them to orchestrate their summer livelihoods. During the weekdays Valley View is crowded with mothers and children, not intact families, as

fathers are at work. Thus the pool acts as a recreational setting that has the potential to reproduce traditional gender roles in children (Chafetz & Kotarba, 1995). Interestingly, recreation has been identified as a site for father-child relationships (Coakely, 2006; Harrington, 2006; Kay, 2006a, 2006b, 2007), and in many ways, the strong mother-child presence at Valley View challenges the taken for granted relationship that men have with leisure settings. Green (1998) argues that “the importance of those leisure spaces should not be underestimated, especially in terms of their potential for resistance and renewal for women enmeshed in patriarchal cultures that continue to define them primarily as (heterosexual) wives and mothers” (p. 172). Therefore the pool, as a site for gendered relationships, is multi-layered, and simultaneously has the potential to reinforce and resist gendered behavior.

Being with “Moms like Me” and Belonging to Valley View

In addition to being a place to go or something to do, part of the reason these mothers see the pool as such an inviting experience is because of the way they feel like they fit into the Valley View community, an important component to women’s experience of the pool as a site for leisure (Green, 1998). Elizabeth explained to me that at the country club her family belongs to she is with “the same moms every year and they never say anything to me even though I’m standing next to them in the pool and stuff like that, and I don’t feel like it’s [like] that at Valley View, it’s friendlier.” I believe that Elizabeth’s implication that she fits in better at Valley View is a reference to her upper-middle class habitus. The membership base at Valley View is less affluent than

those at the elite private clubs in the neighboring suburbs, and Elizabeth feels more comfortable with those people with whom she finds a compatible habitus.

Similarly, many mothers said that the pool offers them a place to feel content, connected, and part of a community. Margaret mentioned that “people are friendly, and it’s family, like I see other moms that are just like me, and they have kids, and they are watching their small ones and big ones, and it fits.” She continued by saying “I love that, to just surround myself with that way, and see the real good people, the real moms that are caring for their children.” Likewise, Rachel explained that the pool is important because she “needed to go around people, families like us.” Lynn said she liked Valley View because “there’s common ground with a lot of the families” and “we’re all kind of in the same situation right now with issues or what they’re doing or what we’re doing.” Other women used phrases such as “moms like me” or “families like us” in talking about Valley View as well, all indicating a particular sense of belonging they feel to the pool and community. Inherent in these comparisons is an expression of their particular class position, and a reference to other women who share the same class habitus. This sense of belonging is important to these women. Jessica alluded to this idea when she explained:

I mean I could just drop the membership—it would be ridiculously much cheaper to go to a public pool whenever we wanted to. But I like just knowing that we have that pool, we can go when we want, it’s not going to be crowded, I know people there so we can hangout with someone we know ... like, we’re guaranteed to know someone there, to have someone to chat with, I don’t know ... there’s something about the public pool and a pool that’s like ... yeah, it would be hard for me to not ever join the pool (Valley View).

While Jessica acknowledges the financial implications of her Valley View membership over the public pool, she indicates that belonging to the club is important enough to pay for. Jessica's words, "there's something about the public pool," are demonstrative of her lived experience of privilege and class-based tastes and preferences for private and exclusive over public and standard. All of the aforementioned comments and references speak to a certain sense of belonging that these women feel with the other families at Valley View, an illustration of their mutual upper-middle class habitus. Bourdieu argues that "the harmony of habitus" has to do with the "imperceptible" embodied "cues" that structure the "relations between social conditions" (1977, p. 82). Further, he believes that one's habitus will find a sense of matching with others with a similar habitus in "a sort of mutual acculturation" which is based on "the immediate affinities which orient social encounters, discouraging socially discordant relationships, encouraging well-matched relationships, without these operations ever having to be formulated other than in the socially innocent language of likes and dislikes" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 243). Wacquant (1989) likens the idea of a one's habitus being a product of the social reality of which it is a part, to being a "fish in water" (p. 43).

According to Bourdieu, habitus implies both a "'sense of one's place'" and also a "'sense of the place of others'" (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 19). Therefore, I argue that part of this sense of belonging to the pool that these women are speaking to is rooted in their upper-middle class *white* privileged habitus, an advantaged status defined by wealth and privilege, and masked through the possession of cultural capital (Darnell, 2007; Kenny, 2000). Recreational spaces, such as swimming pools, are "highly gendered,

classed, and raced" (Fusco, 2005, p. 286), and both the skill of swimming as well as the association with private pools, represent a race and class based exclusivity that has been socially constructed throughout history (Coleman, 1996; Hastings et al., 2006; Wiltse, 2007). Like Jessica's comment above alludes to, many white, upper-income Americans belong to places like Valley View "precisely because they [do] not want to swim in socially unrestricted waters," and prefer the restricted access of clubs that unintentionally control the demographic characteristics of the membership (Wiltse, 2007, p. 193). Additionally, social class, race, and gender "take shape in relation to one another" (Coleman, 1996, p. 585), and are significant "in shaping the context in which motherhood occurs" (Collins, 1994, p. 61; see also Byrne, 2006), as "race is always lived in class-and gender-specific ways" (Harrison, 1995, p. 63). Frankenberg (1993, p. 1) argues that "race shapes white women's lives," explaining a definition of whiteness:

First, whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a 'standpoint,' a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others, and at society. Third, 'whiteness' refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed. (1993, p. 1)

Further she reveals that those occupying the advantaged position of Whiteness do not recognize their privilege as it is only visible to those it excludes (Frankenberg, 1993).

Accordingly, the Valley View women do not acknowledge the socio-historical processes that have contributed to their position of dominance. Yet, Whiteness defines these mothers experience of their own upper-middle class habitus, including their relationship with Valley View. They use the idea of belonging to express their embodied comfort at the pool, and their references to "moms like me" are clearly unconscious euphemisms for others who are white and privileged. Therefore, Valley View operates as a

recreational space responsible for both the expression and reproduction of upper-middle class *white* privilege. Further, I believe the pool is one of the many classed, raced, and gendered institutions emblematic of these women's lived experience of privilege, and thus their habitus.

Uniquely Appropriate: The Pool is Convenient, Comfortable, and Crowd-free

I argue above that the choice to be members at Valley View involves a particular upper-middle class white privileged habitus embodied in the mothers. Throughout my discussions with these women, it became obvious that the decision to be at Valley View was primarily theirs, and it was not a coincidence; rather it was a directed, concerted effort to belong to *this* pool for a variety of reasons. Margaret explained, "well I chose a pool that's close to my house, so it's very close, and I can go there in seven minutes, I chose, it's close by, but I chose it." Many mothers selected Valley View because the layout includes a shallow area for young kids and management allows diapers in the big pool, as Elizabeth explained:

One of the main things that attracted me to Valley View was the fact that I could have my kids in swim diapers in the same pool as my child that didn't. And that was really, to be honest with you, that was one of the things, besides the social aspect of it, like that brought me to Valley View because I could not go to [the country club] without a babysitter. I had to have a babysitter, or I had to have someone to watch Madison in the big pool while I watched the two little ones in the baby pool. Because she was too old for the baby pool, but not old enough to be by herself in the big pool ... and I've talked to a lot of people about that and they agree.

Her sentiments are echoed by many, and indicative of these mothers' current lifestyle involving young children. Given their hectic lives, the women explained that one of the nicest features of Valley View is the fact that you don't have to dress to attend. Heather

said, "it's not a fashion show," and Faith mentioned, "you never feel like you've gotta dress up to go to the pool, or look pretty, you can just go as you are, and no one's like ... it's just [a] very comfortable environment, which is really nice about it." While indicating that not dressing to attend Valley View is a desirable characteristic of the pool, these women are reaffirming the corporeal dimension of their upper-middle class habitus as their comments speak to the fact that they live in a class-based cultural sphere in which there are often implied and specific appearance guidelines (for instance at PTA or social engagements). The idea of appearance maintenance is consistent with an upper-income lifestyle in which presentation is important. Further, the lack of a dress code at Valley View positions membership as distinctive. This resonates with Bourdieu's (1984) contention that the privileged classes are "sure of what they are [and] do not care what they seem" (p. 253), and therefore they do not feel pressured to devote as much time and concern to their appearance. Conversely, Bourdieu (1984) believes the middle class to be extremely cognizant of their appearance, and therefore they "are disposed to sacrifice much time and effort to achieve the sense of meeting the social norms of self-presentation which is the precondition of forgetting oneself and one's body-for-others" (p. 213-4). The middle classes become "committed to the symbolic," whereas the upper classes appear free of judgment given their secure position in the social structure (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 253). These women have already achieved their upper-middle class status and are secure in their embodied social class position.

Some mothers compared Valley View to other pools in their explanations of why they decided to belong. Faith told me that there are multiple reasons why she felt comfortable, in addition to the lack of a dress code. For instance, she likes the seating organization at Valley View, as opposed to the pool they belonged to five years earlier:

At the old pool, I don't know, I just never felt comfortable. And also like the seating, this sounds stupid, but like the seating arrangements at the other pool, they had roped off areas around the, like on the pool deck, so you could only sit like behind the roped off areas, so you actually could not sit on the pool deck.

Jessica spoke of potentially joining the same pool that Faith referred to, mainly because all of her son's friends belong there and he doesn't have any year round friends at Valley View. She told me:

I'm tempted because I know it would make Adam happy, but ugh, I just hate that pool—every time I go there I'm just so miserable. I don't know, just feels like too many people. I mean I feel like basically we go to Valley View and we have the pool to ourselves ... [neighboring pool] is a little closer, it's so crowded, we've all, every year, we think to ourselves should we go to that pool, and then we go one time, and we just don't like it, because it's really crowded all the time I feel like—I've never been there when it's not crowded.

However, regardless of what would make her children the happiest, Jessica belongs to Valley View because she likes it best, and like Faith, she is uncomfortable at this other pool. These women are conveying a strong message that their own comfort is their number one priority. As mentioned, all the pools in the area have approximately the same fee structure for the summer, so their choice has nothing to do with economic capital, rather it is a function of cultural and social capital, or the women's distinctive tastes and preferences for the type of atmosphere and social opportunity that Valley View offers, over and above the other pools in the area.

Additionally, like Jessica explained, almost all of the women noted Valley View as not being crowded and having a friendly, laid-back, easy-going environment, features that are important to their sense of belonging, personal comfort, and enjoyment of the pool. Popular, overcrowded spaces indicate that masses of ordinary people have appropriated them into their lives, and thus “insidiously arouse horror or disgust for objects and practices that have become common” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 249). Valley View, as a crowd-free, private, exclusive recreational space offers members a certain sense of distinction. The pool is located in a suburban area only 12 miles from the heart of a large city, known for its unbearable traffic, and consequently, there is a tendency for the area to be constantly crowded. Stephanie, who lives in the city and commutes 30 minutes out to Valley View, explained to me that she likes it because it is one of the nicer swim and tennis clubs she has seen, and it is much less crowded than the “public pool [which] is really close—and it’s nice—but very crowded.” Tracy and Barb compared it to the jam-packed atmosphere of the local YMCA that has both an indoor and outdoor pool. Barb said, “it’s just too crowded ... I could not have kept a good eye on them there, even in the baby pool I was still nervous, there’s 1000 people walking around, and I just wanted a pool that was less crowded.” Similarly, Tracy explained that the YMCA is way too busy, but “with Valley View you can come at 11 in the morning and nobody is there.” Rachel praised Valley View because it is not crazy all the time, and described another swim and tennis club, only seven tenths of a mile away from Valley View, as “very chaotic.” Overall, it is clear that the women place a high value on Valley View as a private, relatively quiet, relaxing space. Following Frankenberg (1993), these

women's white privilege is characterized by "social distance" (p.48) from others, and this is upheld through "boundary maintenance" (p. 55) techniques. The pool offers a class enclave, socially segregating the upper-middle class membership from the masses occupying the crowded public pools. The premium the mothers place on their own space represents a powerful, prestigious commodity which demonstrates their distinctive, lived experience as white, upper-middle class, privileged women who can shape their own lives.

Kelly, and others, mentioned that one of the best features of the pool, and I would argue the reason it is a bit more serene, is that it does not have "big slides and spurty things" so she "can see clear across the pool ... [and] be very comfortable there." She felt attractions such as these make pools louder, hectic, and dangerous. Multiple mothers view the pool as safe, aside from the obvious drowning danger inherent around any body of water. Cathy explained:

I think it has, for a pool which is important, I think it has a safe environment. And I—just in general, I mean you don't see racous behavior and you don't see rudeness, and even the groups, the kids who come, there aren't really even that many groups of kids who come together, but even when they do, I mean, you know, they're in control and they're polite, so I think it's a nice environment.

In addition to the safety factor, the idea of *who* is at the pool is important as well, as referenced in Cathy's sentiments. Like Cathy alludes to, Valley View has well-behaved children who are "in control" and "polite" in accordance with their upper-middle class manners. This idea of who is at the pool is also referenced in relation to who is not at the pool. Multiple women discussed the fact that the summer represents a break, and

this extends to their social circles, and in particular, their relationships with parents from their children's schools:

And the other appealing thing for me ... [was] once I'd become entrenched at the elementary school, I was very aware of people at that school mostly belonging to a different swim club. And I became very involved in the PTA when the girls were young, and I was very happy to [have] removed myself from that during the summer and not sit around the pool with the same women that I sat around with discussing things with at PTA meetings. I mean, that was a very, that was a big factor for me ... Because there were some very strong personalities and I just wanted—I needed a break. (Heather)

I've heard is [neighboring swim club], all they do for moms is talk about PTA business and school ... we have a lot of school, we've had a lot of school stuff going on, and I'm just so relieved that that's just never a topic of conversation at Valley View, you know it is summer, it's not whatever, so, it's all light, you know? (Sarah)

Well it is less, and that's part of what makes it special in way, because there are people that you just see in the summer. It's nice, I like that there are separate communities, I like that it's not the mother's from my kids school who just talk about the school and the teachers, and the blah blah blah, you know, I love not listening to that. (Sabrina)

[It's] better to be at Valley View because it's a new summer crowd, it's kind of a break, talking about school, being with the same people, I think we have summer friends and then we have school friends, work friends ... it's a break from talking about the same things and the same people. (Reilly)

Through their conscious decision to join Valley View over the other pools in the area, these mothers demonstrate their unconscious lived experience of privilege. They employ their various forms and levels of capital to garner themselves the type of environment where they feel the most comfortable, based on nothing more than “the socially innocent language of likes and dislikes” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 243). Specifically, these women have exercised a level of agency and control over their lives by making the strategic choice to belong to Valley View because of who is *not* there. Thus they are

constructing their social network for particular, directed reasons. The result of this behavior is social segregation, a practice which I have argued is a marker of their upper-middle class habitus. Bourdieu (1984, p. 241) asserts that “taste is what brings together things and people that go together,” and accordingly, these mothers have engineered their membership to the Valley View pool to suit their particular distinctive class-based tastes for an environment that is convenient, comfortable, and not crowded or chaotic.

Summer friends. As mentioned, the idea of who is at the pool is incredibly important to the constitution of the pool membership, as the families who use the pool all consider it a feature of their social network (discussed at length in chapter two). Yet interestingly, as referenced above by the mother’s who use it as an escape from their year round affiliations, there is a concept of “summer friends” at Valley View, and other pools in the area, for both children and adults (cf. Sandys, 2009). In our interview, nine-year old Paige told me that “it’s nice not having a lot of friends at the pool because then you can just pay attention to one of them and be best friends for the summer.”

Similarly Heather explained, “you make very strong friendships, there’s something about the intensity of the summer that’s very magical and special and different.” Elizabeth mentioned that both she and her husband enjoy having multiple groups of friends:

I like that variety, I think it’s good to mix it up with relationships, like, for my husband, he didn’t, it wasn’t that he was only friends with the people from his school, he was friends with people from [his USA swim team], people from [the country club], people from Valley View, people from—and I think that, I’m like that a lot too. I’ve never had just like one group of friends, like I’ve always been friends with tons of people and I like to mix it up and stuff like that.

However, it is very clear that these relationships are in fact about summer friendships, not best friendships. Elizabeth elaborated on her statement, explaining that Valley View is a:

summer community, definitely ... I wouldn't say these are like my best friends or anything like that, they're definitely like a neighborhood environment. We're closer to people from school, or just our outside group of friends and things like that.

And Kristen encapsulated this idea when she offered me her view on socializing at parents' night at the pool:

Valley View, at least once a summer, has sort of a parents only dinner kinda thing. We never go to that. I don't think I would have any interest in going to that. We're really good friends with the Silvers through the neighborhood and some other people, I mean I suppose if all those people were going we might, but it's not a driver of our social life, Edward's and mine.

Kristen's viewpoint is common as the women indicate that Valley View does not drive their social life, rather, as consistent with their upper-middle class position, is only one component of it. For instance, many women share Jessica's sentiments about the Valley View members: "I mean yeah, they're nice people ... it's just not like we hang out with the parents on Saturday nights, but we've become friends with some of them." Cathy said, "you see the same people there day after day, but that doesn't go much beyond a pleasant hello." And Faith explained the idea of these loose, "pleasant" relationships:

I don't know the names of everybody who goes, like I know Tracy is always there, but like there are a bunch of people I know who I always say hello to, and we'll chit chat even, but I don't know their names, but we all know we've been there for years, and I know I know them from the pool.

Rachel said, “we just see them during the summer and we don’t socialize outside of that,” and continued to explain the contrast between the summer and the rest of the year:

Everyone is in different pools. You know during the school year we know what everyone’s doing, like what their friends are doing because you know, everyone’s like, ‘oh, are you getting on the team, or are we doing this?’ — because you know, they’re on the same teams together. But in the summer, everyone kind of goes to different country clubs and different pools, and we don’t talk that much.

Many women, like Rachel indicated, said to me that *everyone* they know has an association with some type of pool. Whether it is in a backyard, the community, or through a country club, pool membership for this social class grouping in this area is widespread. As Swanson (2009b) notes, the use of term “everybody” only “represents those following the same habitus,” possessing the same types of power relations, and having the knowledge to participate in this particular practice (p. 414). Further, Sarah mentioned that these intense summer associations are all but abandoned during the rest of the year:

I’ll run to people during the year, I’ll run into Tracy or Heather, and we have a great time, and we might stop for a few minutes and catch a cup of coffee to catch up with each other, but we don’t usually actively make a plan to see each other, which is funny ... And everybody accepts that too, so nobody’s offended, it’s not like next year your friendship is deteriorated because you haven’t kept it up, it’s almost the expectation that it’s okay to do that, you go to the other things and come back.

While these summer friendships appear quite fluid, loose, and perhaps even superficial, it is important to note that Kristen, Linda, Tracy, Lynn, and Cathy, all of whom live in the large neighborhood adjacent to the pool, explained that in the summer the pool enhances their neighborhood relationships as they see each other more frequently and

enjoy each other's company, but are on different paths during the winter. Lynn explained:

In the summer, [Valley View] enhances the friendships, like if we were there on a Saturday or Sunday, and we're going to be eating on the deck anyway, you know [we'd say] you guys just wanna come over? But on a cold winter day, were not gonna bump into them the same way ... you know we bond more in the summer ... it kind of like puts [the friendship] in a different mode.

And Tracy said, of Kristen's family, "they're neighbors, and we've been good friends with them ... but we see each other so much more in the summer because we're in sync."

Reilly, Elizabeth, and Sabrina all live in a smaller neighborhood overlooking the pool and allude to the same idea.

Overall, I believe that the fluid nature of these summer relationships as described by these mothers is important to their upper-middle class habitus. They demonstrate that their lives in the summertime are not about 'keeping up with the Joneses,' rather they are about demonstrating distinction from the Joneses, and one of the ways that they do this is through their pool membership. Bourdieu explains that lifestyles can be initially hidden by multiple different structured practices that individuals or families may take part in, and therefore class habitus becomes an important concept as it is both a "practice-unifying and practice-generating principle" (1984, p. 101). The "capacity to differentiate and appreciate practices and products," is crucial to an understanding of habitus as social classes can garner distinction by their socially learned, class-based, consumption of goods and services (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170). Accordingly, Valley View is just one distinctive consumption choice for member families as they are not with "everybody" they know all the time. Rather, as I believe is

characteristic of their habitus, they go off on their own during the summer as a way to demonstrate their distinctive lifestyle and privileged existence.

“The Fabric of our Family”: Valley View as a Summer Lifestyle

As I have argued, Valley View is very important to these 20 women and their families. It is a place where they come together with family and friends, it is a place to experience recreation and relaxation, and most importantly, it is a place where childcare is easier because everyone has fun. Pool membership is a significant component of these families’ lived summer experience, so much so, that I assert the practice of going to the pool has become a naturalized expression of their upper-middle class habitus. Sabrina expressed this idea as she said Valley View “is part of our lifestyle ... and it’s nice, it’s really nice for the kids I think.” Heather best described the fond feelings she has for the pool when she explained that Valley View is her “family’s summer ritual.” She believes that over time, the pool has “become just a part of the fabric of our family,” as it is an essential part of their lives during the summer. Similarly, Sarah clarified:

you know, our whole family wants to go, our whole family is happy going, I don’t know what I would do if I had one non-swimmer, it would change everything, probably. If I had somebody complaining where we were everyday, I don’t think we would look at it the same way.

Without question, the all the women saw the pool, as “an easier afternoon” (Reilly), or “an easy way to entertain the kids” (Stephanie). Or, like Tracy mentioned, and Nancy reiterated, “a constant playdate for me and my kids.” These comments demonstrate the fact that the whole family can enjoy the pool in their own way, and consequently why the mothers, like Kelly, “do focus around the swimming” in the summer.

Lynn told me that the pool is a key reason why their lives in the summer are calmer than during the intensity of the school year. The fact that they can just go and have fun represents a much needed break for the whole family. She confessed, “I don’t realize I’m rigid until I’m forced not to be,” and said that during the year everyone gets “so caught up in your schedule, your routine, and ... you have to let go of some things, I think the summertime, more so than ever, you’re not always in control [of your schedule], so I think that’s been good.” Rachel spoke about the pool in a similar way, telling me, “sometimes we overstay at the pool, we should be going home, but if there’s nothing going on the next day, it’s not that big of a deal.” Overall, the pool is where these mothers are happy to be, and they are willing to let go of their self-described ‘type A’ management of family life in order to accommodate Valley View, because as Reilly told me, “my kids love to play in the pool, and I want to facilitate their happiness”—and the mothers enjoy it too.

Accordingly, all of the women told me that they actively plan the pool into their lives in the summer. Sarah explained that for her family, “the pool is there almost everyday in some way ... we’ll have like a late night swim night, or we’ll have a pajama party at the pool ... but there’s almost always a time period when we’re gonna be at the pool during the day.” Kelly also discussed the idea of the pool in her family’s life:

It’s definitely a factor ... we plan our day so that we can go to the pool. I think last summer when Melanie learned how to swim because she was in the water everyday, it’s just being comfortable in the water, which means being in the water. And you know, it’s something we look forward to, and it’s something we try to make time for, and we do make time for it. And when I am working, I wake up really really early, and then I was picking the kids up from camp, and it was so nice for me to go to the pool, because when you come home, bickering starts, and the TV gets turned on, and I’m too tired to handle all of that, so

everyone's happy when we go to the pool, so it's a nice alternative, so it definitely shapes our summers.

The pool is a staple in most of these women's weekday lives, as Nancy explained, "our afternoon is at Valley View, so we try to end our day there." However, weekends are important as well, because they represent a time when the whole family, including fathers, can go to the pool together, and the day is more relaxed. For instance, Jessica said, that "I really can't imagine trying to get through a weekend without going, unless the weather's bad. I feel like it's a priority of mine ... to go at least once a weekend, if not more." Sabrina explained, "much of our daytime weekend activity is around that ... is centered around the pool, at least one or both days." Overall, the pool represents an important component of these families' lifestyles in the summer.

Preparing to be at the pool is an important part of actually going to the pool for the mothers. Heather summed up a practice many of the moms engaged in when she explained, "you kinda have to plan ahead, because there's no food there, so if you're gonna come and stay for the day, you have to be one of those moms who trucks in her juice boxes and her grapes." Sarah told me that bringing food "requires a little more prep on my part." Similarly, preparing to leave the pool is also a process. For instance, almost all of the mothers that had young children explain to me that they shower their kids at the pool so they have one less thing to do at night before bedtime:

I like to shower the kids at the pool so we don't have to worry about that, and then just have dinner, and [go] to bed. (Kelly)

We shower there, so we're all done and, you know they're not my favorite showers in the world, but at least they'll shower there so they're clean and then we head home and get ready for bed, and will probably have a snack, and go through the whole bed time routine. (Faith)

And after they take a shower in the pool, they come in pajamas to the house, dinner, do something for 45 minutes, and back to bed. (Nancy)

I observed this practice every evening when I left the pool. The showers are mayhem with kids screaming, attempting to escape back into the pool, or trying to continue to play together and ignore their moms. The mothers are frantically chasing their kids and trying to make sure they are washed and dried before they get dressed. I believe that this maternal attention given to preparing to go to and leave the pool, for example the emphasis on bringing healthy foods (discussed at length in chapter one), and making sure that even though their kids just swam in chlorinated water for hours, they are clean and showered, is demonstrative of both upper-middle class child rearing ideologies and these women's habitus. Further, these families' lived experience of a Valley View summer, again represents their privileged class position, as many Americans cannot offer their families the same luxury.

Valley View as a Leisure Experience

While frenzied mothers may be charged with chasing their children around the showers, many revealed that regardless, attending Valley View in the summer is more fun than trying to accommodate their children's swimming in the winter. For example, Margaret confessed that her daughter's winter swim lessons are a chore:

it was starting to get what I don't like, okay quickly, put on the swim suit, 30 minutes you have your class, up you go, let's go, it's more like a chore—I didn't like that. I like it the way [Valley View is] incorporated in your way of life, you have your fun ... jump in the pool ... all incorporated like this is normal way of doing things.

As Margaret alludes to, and all of the mothers expressed, the experience at Valley View, for all family members involved, is easier, more fun, and less complicated than other forms of recreation. Swimming is a common leisure activity for families because it often accommodates both women and children's leisure interests (Deem, 1986). Further, mothers tend to play an "instrumental role in shaping the organized recreation participation patterns of their children" (Howard & Madrigal, 1990, p. 255), and thus through their enjoyment of Valley View, they are developing their children's embodied preferences regarding summer leisure. The women report relaxing and socializing at the pool while their children are participating in an appropriate, fun, physical activity, sentiments which are contrasted by comments about the drudgery of their children's winter and non-Valley View activities, such as soccer games and basketball practice (discussed in chapter three).

While the mothers explained that they do not have much personal leisure time in their lives, they all considered the pool to be a much needed relaxation experience, as evidenced by an odd situation I documented in my field notes:

She came into the pool today and said hello to me. I was sitting in a chair next to the lanes I was coaching wearing a knee brace due to an injury. Immediately she asked what was wrong with my knee and I explained I had hurt it. She then apologized for [her daughter] missing this week's practice and meet, and explained that she had to go the unveiling of a condo complex with her family and told me how wonderful it was. She proceeded to tell me that my husband and I should use her name and go up to the top of any of her family's buildings and just have a drink on the roof and look at the sites of [the city]. Thanking her, I told her that sounded pretty cool. As she repeated 'yeah, just have a drink,' she tapped her plastic cup. Immediately she said, 'not that there is a drink in here, you know, just water, I'm on a diet! Two weeks, I'm on a diet, no drinks! You can have the ice in here, for your knee!' 'No, no, thank you,' I said, 'I'm fine.' Then she said, 'really it's just water, I promise, the ice would be good for your knee.' I repeated my no thanks answer and she said, 'yeah, today it's just

water—usually its wine. You know, after a long day, I pour myself a cup of wine, and come on over to the pool, you know, just to take the edge off and relax.’ Nodding in disbelief, and thankful I was wearing a hat and sunglasses so she could not see the expression on my face, I chuckled, and she said, ‘see you later, sweetie!’ Once she said this, I realized how many people are walking around the pool with plastic cups from their cabinets ...

This is certainly a unique conversation, however, it illustrates, aside from my concern that this woman has a six-year old daughter and is sneaking alcohol into the pool in the middle of the afternoon, that the women really do use their time at the pool to “take the edge off and relax” after a long day. For instance, Tracy volunteered, “I consider being at the pool leisure time.” None of the women could name an analogous pleasurable, relaxing, recreational activity that took place during the rest of the year, and I believe this is an important reason why they look forward to the summer. For instance, Nancy confessed, “that’s my rest time. Because, yeah, that’s the two hours that I lay down, maybe more than two hours, and just do nothing.” Others, particularly those with older kids, like Lauren (daughters eight and 11), commented that the pool “is a place where it is nice to relax, and it’s maybe one of not many times when I can really read a book and just relax, so I’m going to enjoy that time.” Lauren also confessed that she continued her membership at Valley View this summer specifically to have her “treasure[d]” personal time:

we used to go to the pool together with our friends, and this year they decided to join [neighboring swim club], and it was a very very conscious decision on my part [to stay]. I really like socializing with them, but I wanted terribly to have time for myself.

Time to be on their own, relaxing in whatever manner they saw fit, is important to the women. Rachel (daughter seven, son nine) said, “nowadays, I’ll take a book, well I

haven't taken a book, I'll take magazines. It's not hard work to sit there at the pool, now that the kids are that age." Linda (sons eight and fourteen) said the same thing of her time at the pool, "that's the time period where I have relaxation. That's when I answer all my phone calls or check my emails or send a few emails, that's my time." Even mothers who are still chasing after young children find the pool to be relaxing. For example, Reilly told me that she is constantly following her two and a half year old daughter around the pool, but her time at Valley View "feels leisurely to me because I just like to be in that atmosphere." Likewise, Barb, who has twin six-year olds, said:

To me it's relaxing, even when they were little in the first year, and they couldn't swim, it was still fairly relaxing, I wouldn't say it's as relaxing as it is now. Now I know I can swim during adult swim, and they can sit on the thing and eat snacks.

Kelly added, "absolutely that's a nice time, I make time to do it, because I enjoy it just as much as they do." The mothers take pleasure in the social time they get at the pool, albeit with their summer-only friends, but nevertheless, as Faith explained, when she arrives at Valley View, "I get to go with my friends, and especially now that [the kids] are older." Lynn also said that the pool allows her "to have like adult girl time, without being scheduled some place." This includes time to chat on her cell phone or talk to neighbors while watching the kids in the pool, all things that she does not do at home in an effort not to interrupt family time. Through these comments it is clear that the women do in fact take pleasure in their time at Valley View, which is part of the reason they make a concerted effort to incorporate it into their lifestyle.

Operating in a family structure in which one can attend a private pool during the day is certainly a practice reserved for more privileged individuals, yet at Valley View,

this behavior is normalized as it is commonplace for many of the mothers who frequent the pool. The fact that these women's lifestyles include leisure time at the pool, regardless of their motivation for attending, and the frenetic nature of their schedules, is illustrative of their lived experience of privilege. Bourdieu (1984) explains that "the symbolic value of leisure activities lies in the ability to give both time and money to them." He also argues that lifestyle is the product of habitus, and becomes a sign indicating distinction, particular social standing, and certain social qualifications (Bourdieu, 1984). Habitus is acquired through a personal understanding of one's actual social and economic status, and functions as a "unifying principle" which serves to relate particular experiences to social class position (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 83). Therefore, habitus accounts for "practice in its humblest of forms," including the ordinary "conduct of everyday life" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 121). For the Valley View mothers, their daily summer reality involves an afternoon trip to the pool and built in time for leisure and socialization.

"I'm not a kid, I don't play with kids": Maternal behavior at the pool. The way the mothers reported their relative level of leisure at the pool corresponded precisely to what they did at the pool, and I believe their conduct illustrates an additional feature of their embodied habitus. The women's accounts of their own behavior were very honest, and corroborated what I have observed and documented in my field notes over my time in the field. In fact, I believe their candidness about their behavior at the pool gives their overall interview answers quite a bit of credibility. For the most part, all the mothers report reading, socializing, and/or trying to keep a watch over their kids at the

same time, like Kelly who explained, “I’m either sitting on the side of the pool watching the kids as they show me what they do, or chatting with a friend, and often sitting on the side of the pool while watching.” Many of the women described similar behavior:

Watching Amanda, and you know, talking with friends, socializing for sure. (Lila)

I am sitting and watching Andy and whatever he is doing, and sometimes I read my emails, or reading a book, or doing some brain games, not much. If I get to see someone that I know, I say hello or chat with them for a little while. (Linda)

Mostly sitting and watching the kids, talking to other people. (Jessica)

I’m watching the boys. I mean we’ve migrated this year, we were in the shallow part, and so now were like half way around the pool ... I’m watching them, either poolside, or sitting on the chair by poolside. (Lynn)

I’d say I’m primarily sitting in a low chair on the edge while they do dive sticks right now. (Barb)

Mothers, whose youngest child fell into the six to 10 year old age range criteria for participation, explained that they did not have to pay close attention to their water safe kids, and spent most of their time at Valley View talking with other parents. Sarah said of her youngest, “I mean this is such a turning point year because I don’t have to physically be in the water with her at every moment, it’s wildly different.” Rachel went so far as to say she provides “very little supervision” for her children at the pool and is “off socializing or reading my magazine.” Cathy admitted, “I read at the pool. I sit on my chair and I read my newspaper, and I’m a much happier soul doing that.” Similarly, Lauren added that when her daughter is swimming, she “was reading a book because I didn’t have to watch over her, because I knew that she would not go anywhere far. The set-up is very good from that point of view.” In my field notes I documented a slightly different situation with a girl and her mother:

Today I also had a lesson with [girl]. I met her and her mom for the first time today. [Girl] is four and a half and was happy to come swim with me immediately, and didn't seem scared, didn't get upset with anything, she was very easy. The one thing she said to her mom before the lesson started was 'Mom, promise me you will watch all of the lesson?' Her mom said 'of course, I'll be right here.' About five minutes in, [girl] was kick boarding back toward where her mom was sitting and said to me, 'she said she was going to watch all of it, and now look at my Mom, she's reading a book!'

This inattentiveness clearly bothers the children, however, it is obvious that because of this lack of supervision, the mothers actually experience a sense of leisure and relaxation at the pool, as well as an ease of child care responsibilities. Over the duration of the summer, I always notice that the lack of monitoring behavior continues to decrease as mothers grow more confident about their children's swim skills by late July and August.

Based on my observations and their reflections, it was apparent that the mothers find themselves either sitting on the side of the pool or standing in the shallow area with the water just past their knees, but very few of them are actively in the water. Sarah told me that while she does go in the pool a lot, "there are a lot of moms who don't like the temperature, or whatever." Almost all of the women pointed out that Tracy and Sarah are constantly in the water with their kids and they wish they could be too, but they are just not swimmers. Ironically Tracy said to me, "you know, I mean right now I still have a three-year old who wants me to swim with him, you know in a couple years, I might be one of those [women] sitting back reading a magazine in the shade." Both Tracy and Sarah swim laps as a workout at least once per week in the summer. Lila confessed to me in our interview that she tried to do a 45 minute session of lap swimming with Sarah and remarked, "I quit half way through, I'm done!" A

couple mothers told me that during the 15 minute adult swim periods each hour they try to do a few laps, however, I noted this type of behavior only on rare occasions. Interestingly, Linda, a self-professed non-swimmer, said to me that one thing she observed in her time on the lawn chair is that parents do not really get into the pool. Rachel, who by mid-July confessed, "I haven't gone in once yet, because I'm not a big pool person," explained this was because swimming "is too much work for me, all the shaving, all the getting ready, and I'm like 'ah, I just washed my hair today.'" Cathy who admitted, "I'm usually clothed, I'm not even in a bathing suit," really uses her time sitting at the pool to "enjoy watching the kids have fun." Sabrina summed up what many mother's alluded to:

While I do love the pool, I don't always get in, I mean when it's so hot out, I'll get in, but I'm past that stage where I really like to play in the pool. I don't really like to play in the pool with my kids. I know there are parents in there all the time and I feel bad because my kids are hanging on them, but that's what they get for getting in the pool, I'm staying in the shade ... Like my sister once said, I'm not a kid, I don't play with kids. I'm not a four-year old, I don't want to play with four-year olds. So you know, I love to watch them playing with each other. I just enjoy it.

Similarly, Nancy remarked, "I don't use the pool, I don't get in the water," and Stephanie said, "I mean I could go in, but I tend not to do that as much ... I'm happy to just lounge there, or catch up on some reading." The fact that these women do not get in the pool frequently, yet they spend a large amount of time in the summer at the pool with their children, is important to consider. Cathy told me an interesting story about her son's reflections about her at the pool:

Michael's school, they had to, in sixth grade [they] do a chapel presentation, which involves a powerpoint presentation and they have to present in front of the fifth and sixth grade class. He did Valley View swimming. And so as we were

practicing it, and he also talked about the importance of his family at Valley View, not just the swim team—family time at Valley View, and he has this little description of dad jumping off the diving board and swimming, and then you get to mom who sits on the chair and reads and tans and chats to friends. And I looked at him and I said, ‘oh my God, this makes me look like one of those people!’ But you know, I do—I sit on the lounge chair ... [so] you know ... I have to stop and say that is exactly how he sees it, so as a result I have tried harder this year to get in the pool, like we were swimming laps the other day.

First, I think it is very important to make it clear that never once, in four years of knowing Cathy, have I ever thought of her as one of the women who just lounges and tans. Her recounting of Michael’s project paints her as someone who is perhaps inattentive and superficial, however I have always thought of her as one of the most generous, friendly, and kind people at the pool that cares deeply for her children and is very involved. Yet Cathy’s confession, like many of the mothers, offers an important illustration of her role at the pool. Similar to Coleman’s (1996) discussion of whiteness in skiing, the mother’s participation at Valley View is primarily social and designed as a way to demonstrate their class status while minimizing corporeal activity because standing in the water or sitting by the pool dressed in a bathing suit suffices. Looking the part, as opposed to actually being in the water, is crucial to these women’s lived experience at Valley View. Ultimately, they are using the pool as a demonstration of their social status, and further, as a physical space which is simultaneously a site of leisure for them, and productive, skill-building fun for their children (discussed at length in chapter three).

However, Cathy’s contention regarding what her kids think is important, particularly in the context of what the children told me in our interviews. Cathy bluntly said to me, “I admit, the boys give me a hard time because I don’t go in as much as I

should.” Her younger son, Alex, told me in our interview that “usually mom’s there reading the magazine, Michael and me will be playing, and dad ... he’ll hop in.” In our interview, Emma said of her mom, Kristen, “I actually like being there, I don’t really care who it’s with, except someone, eh hem, has only been in once [referring to her mom sitting right there].” She said that she wishes her mom would swim and play more with her in the pool. Gary, whose mother Rachel told me, “I know [the kids] do want me to get in,” explained the same thing, “Mom hasn’t even gotten into the pool this year ... my dad usually goes in.” Gary’s identification of his father getting in the pool with him was echoed throughout my interviews with all of the kids, and even through a comment from Heather who observed, “Dads like to get in the water with their kids and play.” I had the following conversation with twins Matt and Madeline:

JRD: How come you like coming with your family?

Matt: Because my dad’s going in the water, and he picks me up and throws me.

JRD: So is it really cool that your dad is such a good swimmer?

Madeline: Yeah, but not my mom.

JRD: You wish she went in with you?

Madeline: Yeah.

Matt: Remember when it was raining at the pool, everyone left, we were the last ones, and Evan was the second last people and when they left, we stayed there two more hours?

JRD: You stayed two more hours that night?

Madeline: Yeah. Because [of] our dad.

They reflected on this evening in the context of how much fun they have with their dad, a former swimmer, who doesn't mind staying at the pool, even in the rain, just to play. Evan also said his dad is more fun in the pool because he throws him and they can play together. Ingrid told me her dad takes her out to the deep end but her mom doesn't like to get in the water because it is cold, and Meghan simply just said, "my dad is very fun in the pool." These comments, and others, from the children illustrate how much they enjoy being with their fathers at Valley View. Incidentally, Lareau (2000) reports that dads tend to be more "playful," and bring "color, fun, informality, and 'accent' to family life" (p. 422). Indirectly, this dichotomy between the mothers' and fathers' behavior at the pool, as noticed by both mothers and children, is an important realization as the pool is very significant to member families, representing their lived reality each summer. Byrne (2006, p. 1002) argues that "the experience of and practices involved in mothering are inescapably and irreducibly gendered" (Byrne, 2006, p. 1002). Accordingly, Valley View provides an environment where children observe the performance of gender in and through their parents, behaviors which effectively shape their own gendered identities. In addition, they unconsciously acquire subtleties about their classed and raced dispositions, crucial to the reproduction of their upper-middle class position. Overall, the lived experience families enjoy at the pool is largely controlled by the mothers, and is emblematic of their privileged lifestyles.

The Valley View women's day to day lives are governed by a traditional, gendered division of labor as they work hard to facilitate the management of their

family lives, maintain the household and custodial care of the children, and hold down professional jobs that do not interfere with family life. I have argued that while these women are busy controlling their families' schedules, livelihoods, and activities, their maternal role and responsibilities have the unintended consequence of demonstrating gender inequalities to their children. In addition, these women's lives are mediated by their upper-middle class status as they use their class-based power to control their families, with the goal of reproducing their privilege in and through their children. Further, a significant component of these women's lives in the summer is their Valley View membership. Daily trips to the pool with their children offer them an escape from their domestic isolation, a sense of belonging in a relaxing atmosphere, an opportunity to socialize, and a leisure experience. However, their membership serves not only to reproduce their gendered, maternal role, but also their class status as they unconsciously engage in the practice of social segregation through the selection of the Valley View pool for specific, directed reasons related to their social and cultural capital. Ultimately, I believe the pool, as a constitutive element of these mothers' lived experience, operates as a distinctive consumption choice in line with their embodied white, upper-middle class habitus.

Conclusion

In sum, drawing on Bourdieu's theorizing on social class, I believe this dissertation has offered a more complete understanding of the relationship between upper-middle class culture, family life, and swimming participation, derived from an in-depth examination of the empirical characteristics, lived experience, and culture of the Valley View Swim and Tennis Club. The dominant class position occupied by member families offers them a great deal of freedom and control over their lives. Further, their social location allows them to view their membership as a taken for granted, naturalized component of their summertime leisure activities. However, their privileged status, in combination with their Valley View affiliation, has the unintended consequence of creating race and class-based boundaries that operate to keep others out, and preserve and/or promote the relationships and status of those who belong. Thus the pool, as a socially segregated, restricted, physical space, allows families a distinctive opportunity to express their respective social position, and further, work to transmit and convert their various capitals in and through their children in an effort to reproduce their social class privilege in the next generation.

Specifically, the four empirically-based chapters in this dissertation, framed by aforementioned major themes, have discussed various aspects of the Valley View members' lived reality of privilege, and how their pool membership corresponds to their lifestyle. Chapter one described the way in which Valley View provides children with a distinctive healthy-lifestyle, emblematic of their upper-middle class social status,

through particular, directed physical, medical, and mental benefits crucial to their well-being. Valley View offers parents a physical space to reproduce their economic, cultural, and social capital, and also to develop their children's sense of cultural and social capital, and assist them in gaining lifelong physical capital. Accordingly, pool affiliation is important to aid in the acquisition, transmission, conversion, and reproduction of these embodied capitals, and the tools to live a healthy lifestyle expressive of their class status. Complementing chapter one, chapter two examined the way in which Valley View membership contributes to the construction of a family habitus, and explained how summer pool membership provides families with a powerful, consistent source of family time, and thus, is emblematic of their lived experience of privilege. Specifically, it detailed how members have invested their economic capital in order to facilitate their consumption of Valley View, a context they believe aids in the conversion and transmission of cultural and social capital in and through their children, with the express purpose of producing "good people." Chapter three focused on the way in the upper-middle class Valley View mothers' exhibit distinguishing upper-middle class childrearing ideologies as they control their children's extra-curricular activity participation with the ultimate goal of producing "well-balanced" individuals. Accordingly, they have strategically engineered Valley View into their children's lives for the intangible, cultural-capital building opportunity it provides. They believe that the pool allows kids to have unstructured play time and a sense of freedom, and further, that it operates as an important and powerful approach for promoting their children's confidence. Finally, chapter four is devoted to understanding the Valley View mothers lived experience of

privilege, and the way in which their lives have been shaped by the intersection of class, race, and gender. In particular, this chapter discussed their upper-middle class habitus, or their daily lifestyle practices, which is governed by their family labor, careers, leisure activities, and domestic responsibilities. Pool membership is an important, constitutive feature of these women's lives as it offers them a sense of belonging, a distinctive atmosphere, and an opportunity to experience relaxation.

Overall, I believe this project has elucidated a more nuanced understanding of practices and processes defining the lived experience of privilege, and specifically, the empirical characteristics constituting the Valley View members' habitus. Ultimately their upper-middle class habitus, and the lifestyle practices associated with those who occupy this privileged class position, is anchored in a desire to preserve their social class status, and transmit, convert, and reproduce it in future generations. Explicitly, as I have discussed at length in the aforementioned chapters, these families' upper-middle class habitus is illustrated through their lifestyle practices and beliefs regarding family time and the maintenance of a traditional family structure; childrearing techniques; the formation of a healthy lifestyle; and distinctive physical cultural activities, such as pool membership, which reinforce their value system.

The families in this research preached a high regard for family time, or time spent with all or a few family members together in the same place. Family time, in and of itself, signals a particular level of privilege as not everyone is able to afford to spend time this way, nor has the luxury of a supportive family structure. As I have argued in the aforementioned chapters, this desire is a constitutive element of the upper-middle

class habitus. All families in this research are members of the SNAF, and feature the male, paternal figure as the main breadwinner, and the female maternal figure as responsible for the daily and custodial care of the home and family, regardless of their status in the labor force. While many of the women's comments illustrate their complicit participation in the reproduction of patriarchal relations, their continued maintenance of this type of family arrangement is at the root of their class-based privilege and they receive great benefit by maintaining it. Not only does this family structure signal a higher class positioning, but it also allows for more family time and quality maternal care aimed at reproducing privileged upper-middle class children. The conscious decision of these highly educated, successful couples to relegate the mother primarily to a family care role is characteristic of the upper-middle class habitus. This institutional configuration operates as a mechanism to maintain, preserve, and reproduce class status.

In combination with their family structure and time for togetherness, the Valley View families' childrearing practices have proved to be illustrative of their class habitus. Parental social class influences children's lives and has "a powerful impact in shaping the daily rhythms of family life" (Lareau, 2003, p. 8). Lareau (2003) has argued that the middle class engages in concerted cultivation, a childrearing ideology geared towards cultural promotion which helps kids come to understand the institutional "rules of the game" (p.6), better prepares them for a successful adulthood, and makes sure they do not miss any opportunities that could benefit them in the future. This process involves fostering children's talent, opinions, and skills; organizing multiple activities into their

schedules; using reason and directives and negotiation in verbal relations with the child; and intervening in a child's life in order to train him/her to take on an appropriate role. While there are certainly parenting similarities across the spectrum of the middle class members, the upper-middle class Valley View families exercise distinction from the working and middle classes through their childrearing practices which revolve around class preservation rather than promotion. I argue that their habitus is defined by a form of concerted cultivation that involves offering their children the opportunity to learn embodied dispositions, beliefs, and practices consistent with their class status, and thus the chance to occupy the same social standing in later life. Similar to the middle class, the Valley View parents want their children be successful in the future, however, in contrast to the middle class, they assert this will have occurred if, above all else, their children grow up happy and healthy. Further, they believe success can be accomplished through the maintenance of a solid family, education, and a well-rounded childhood, complete with cultural experience, sports, music, arts, etc. The Valley View parents work to engender their children with a rich and distinct sense of capital that is demonstrative of their class position and will help them earn economic capital in later life. Specifically, upper-middle class children acquire valuable social capital, such as looking people in the eye and belonging to a variety of different networks; cultural capital, through a vast number of different cultural experiences (such as theater, restaurants, exotic vacations, education, classes, and leisure activities), as well as the opportunity to develop an embodied sense of confidence, and tastes for particular distinctive cultural goods; and physical capital by virtue of exclusive leisure activities

such as swimming, tennis, and golf, as well as particular corporeal dispositions signaling class position. Overall, I believe that the upper-middle class Valley View parents child rearing ideologies are enmeshed in their largely unacknowledged techniques of capital conversion and transmission, and demonstrated by their taken for granted class habitus, a set of unconscious lifestyle practices aimed at reproducing their social class privilege.

Additionally, as part of the practices and processes associated with concerted cultivation, the middle classes tend to favor hyper-scheduling of children's activities in order to stimulate their bodies and minds (Lareau, 2003; Messner, 2009; Rosenfeld & Wise, 2000). However, again, the Valley View parents position themselves as distinct through their resistance to this type of frenetic lifestyle. As emblematic of their habitus, the upper-middle class advocates time for children to relax and recuperate in order for them to get the most out of the few activities in which they partake. Further, the upper-middle class parents refer to themselves as "selfish" for not accommodating crazy schedules and children's whims, an attitude distinctly associated with their habitus. They make a directed effort to cultivate various capitals in their children, yet this is done on their own terms and must be convenient. Parental help, support, and transportation are necessary to facilitate children's activities (Lareau, 2003; Thompson, 1999; Swanson, 2003), and the Valley View families carefully strategize about which extracurricular pursuits will be mutually beneficial for all members of the family. Activities are selected for their cultural value, in order to improve skills/competencies, their ability to create well-balanced children, and/or their impact on precious family time. Ultimately, upper-middle class children function as a demonstrative indicator of class privilege, and

accordingly, the upper-middle class habitus again operates to reproduce familial status in and through children. Their actions are intended to transmit and convert their class-based privilege, and thus their childrearing practices focus around reproducing particular embodied dispositions, belief systems, mannerisms, and affinities in children, through ordinary, naturalized, taken for granted everyday settings and situations.

Further, the upper-middle class habitus is concerned with longevity and the development and maintenance of a healthy lifestyle emblematic of class location. The Valley View parents, and mothers in particular, are adamant about raising healthy children, physically, mentally, and medically, as the body is representative and expressive of social status. They work to provide healthy opportunities for their children, be it through diet, physical activity, and relationships. Healthy lifestyles empower individuals to take control of their lives and well-being, and accordingly, outward displays of health, and health-maintaining behaviors, function as markers of class privilege (Cockerham, 2005). Therefore the upper-middle class habitus is predicated on an investment in the future. Specifically, families make a concerted effort to eat healthy foods, engage in appropriate types of physical activity, relate with specific individuals, seek regular and preventative medical care, gain continued health knowledge, and overall, protect their bodies from anything unhealthy in order to reproduce healthy habits in future generations.

Valley View membership operates as one such healthy lifestyle practice as it provides these aforementioned benefits, as well as the opportunity to spend family time and cultivate important capitals in and through children. Pool membership is a

naturalized, commonplace affiliation for members of the upper-middle class habitus, and further, those who subscribe to this lifestyle believe that everybody has access to a swim club, and cannot imagine life without it. Accordingly, through Valley View, members' value systems are reinforced in and through each other, and their decision to belong is continuously validated. Valley View simultaneously provides a restricted social network, a supervised environment for unstructured and structured activity, leisure time, a sport and/or skill building opportunity, and a physical space for the transmission and conversion of important, class-defining capitals. Pool affiliation is illustrative of social class position through characteristics such as family tradition, monetary investment, and requisite skills. Additionally, those who belong receive numerous, crucial, intangible benefits helping them to conserve their privileged class position as Valley View membership operates as a class-based maintenance technique, and is emblematic of their upper-middle class habitus.

Social segregation is an unintended consequence of the Valley View club, as well as other selective, exclusive, and restrictive venues that the upper-middle class frequents. Interacting among socially segregated groups is a distinctive feature of the upper-middle class habitus. Parents tend to seek out diverse experiences for their children, however they are generally not with low income or racialized others (Pugh, 2009). Homogenous, white, upper-middle class spaces, such as the pool, operate to transmit, convert, and engender particular embodied capitals in and through children, thereby aiding in the reproduction of a white, upper-middle class privilege. Valley View, as a class-based enclave, inadvertently maintains boundaries which have been

developed through a history of social segregation and exclusivity that governs private club membership. The upper-middle class habitus is marked by a penchant for club membership, and various other similar social networks, and can be characterized by a taken for granted, naturalized expectation and desire to be around people who demonstrate similar dispositions and status. These types of bounded experiences reinforce and secure social class position, and further, help promote the successful transmission of appropriate practices, behaviors, and beliefs to children.

Ultimately the upper-middle class habitus, expressed by the Valley View members lifestyle practices, is anchored in a desire to preserve social class status, and transmit, convert, and reproduce it in future generations. Accordingly, while their everyday lifestyle practices and embodied dispositions appear mundane and natural, they are actually quite significant, and operate collectively as a powerful signal of social class position. Cumulatively, the constitutive elements of the upper-middle class habitus function to preserve and reproduce class privilege. The aforementioned dimensions of the upper-middle class habitus have been illustrated through Valley View club members' attitudes, behaviors, and dispositions, and further, their desire to facilitate the embodied performance, expression, and subsequent reproduction of social class privilege in and through the status project that is their children. They regard their pool membership as an important part of their summer and family lives, and as such, it operates as a physical space to accomplish various techniques, practices, and processes associated with class reproduction.

Limitations and Future Directions

This research has contributed to the development of a more complex understanding of the upper-middle class habitus and the everyday experience of privilege. However, there are some restrictions and limitations associated with this project. First is the issue of reflexivity as it pertains to my relationships with participants (addressed at length in the appendix B). Over the course of this research, I held multiple roles at Valley View, the most obvious to others was my position as a swim coach and instructor, with my researcher role being more covert. In some ways, this garnered me more respect and access to situations I may not have been privy to otherwise, but it also allowed participants to present themselves to me in a different way than they may have to a true outsider and/or researcher. Additionally, consistent with the practices in the ethnographic research process, all data, analysis, interpretations, and subsequent findings were mediated through me and my particular subjectivities, and thus the data was limited by my perspective (Boyd, 2008; Denzin, 1997; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Saukko (2003) explains that one “can only understand the Other through reflecting on its similarity to and difference from, the Self” (p. 56). Accordingly, while I believe I have done my best to avoid bias, mitigate any threats to the quality of this project, and represent the Valley View community and its members to the best of my ability, I must acknowledge that this project is shaped through, and limited by, my own identity, experiences, and subjectivities.

This project was conducted over four summers which gave me prolonged exposure to Valley View and its members. As the researcher, I gained extensive lived

experience in this community, achieving saturation. However, a portion of the empirical material discussed in the four previous chapters generalizes ideas and sentiments across participant's year round lives. Much of what is presented is directly related to Valley View and the summertime, but some of the information discusses parts of the members' lives that I was not directly able to observe due to the constraints and aims of this research. I do not believe this threatens my findings or any aspect of this project, yet it is a noteworthy limitation.

Along with the mothers, children were also interviewed over the course of this research, nevertheless I found that the majority of my empirical data came from my conversations and interactions with the maternal figure in each family. While I believed this to be the most helpful for the purposes and goals of this particular project, in the future, I think spending more time gaining the children's perspective regarding swimming, pool membership, swimming subcultures they may be a part of, their daily/activity schedules, and their own interpretations of their class-based lives, would serve as a very interesting, important, and relevant project.

Further, this project did not really consider the paternal perspective. Often times the women and children interviewed spoke about their husbands and fathers respectively, however this research did not take their point of view into the analysis and interpretation of the relationship between family, swimming, and social class. The mothers presented a one-sided view of themselves as the family authority on their pool membership, child rearing practices, and overall household management. Data gathered from fathers could offer a very informative and interesting source of

information adding credibility and insight to this research. Fathering through leisure sites has been identified as an understudied, yet powerful parenting opportunity (Coakley, 2006; Kay, 2006a, 2006b, 2007; Harrington, 2006), and should be a consideration in future research.

An additional limitation to this project is the fact that the research was only conducted at Valley View, rather than multiple different pools. For the purposes of this research, the Valley View members have been labeled white, upper-middle class SNAFs. However, it is possible that a neighboring pool in the same town may have a completely different demographic composition. Also, it may have been helpful to conduct in-depth research, similar to what I did at Valley View, at a swim club in a less affluent and/or more racially diverse area to assess the similarities and differences across cases. I believe this is an important avenue for future research.

Along these same lines, an additional direction for this research to go relates to investigating issues related to tensions or ambivalences members feel about some element of their membership, highlighting their differences and individual sentiments. I believe this project was successful in uncovering and discussing the similar nature of the Valley View families' lived experiences, both through the pool as well as in other aspects of their lives. However, through this research, I did not delve deeper into any differences across cases, mainly because that was not a goal of this project, but also because I found overwhelming empirical data that spoke to homogeneity of members' lives. Yet without question, each of these families is different. They may have many things in common, but everyone is unique in their own way, and has different feelings,

values, and beliefs that are based on their own subjectivities. Future research should tackle these issues and try to bring about the Valley View members apprehensions or uncertainties about not only their pool membership, but also various other facets of their upper-middle class lives.

All 20 of the families interviewed professed a deep fondness for their pool membership. While I do not doubt the sincerity of their affinity for Valley View, I also know there are members who have left the pool in the past, and I'm sure there will continue to be members who leave in the future. I have not been aware of the reasons why people do not renew their membership, but believe this could be an important project. Perhaps they have left as a result of other members, or because they do not place value on the same intangible qualities of Valley View, or because they had some adverse life event. Regardless, assessing reasons for membership attrition could provide additional explanations for Valley View's culture, existing members' relationship with the pool, and the motivations for other practices and behaviors defining the upper-middle class habitus.

In addition, future research should also re-assess these Valley View families at regular intervals. It would be very interesting to discover these children's behaviors, attitudes, and practices over the next few decades, and how their parents' emphasis on both the pool and the development of a healthy, upper-middle class lifestyle impact their lives. Specifically, a project such as this should take into account their overall health, their participation in swimming over the years, their memories of Valley View, their future educational and occupational achievements, their evolving views on their

childhood, and their future choices for sport and leisure participation, among a host of other characteristics which this dissertation touched upon.

Overall, this research has discovered significant details regarding the link between swimming, family, and the upper-middle class. This relationship should be analyzed in other sport and leisure settings, and from the aforementioned perspectives, particularly considering the way in which the empirical details and lived experience of the Valley View families have provided important insights into the upper-middle class habitus. Future research should continue to investigate this connection in order to better understand how all individuals and families from a multitude of different backgrounds appropriate recreational spaces into their lives.

Lastly, I believe this project has made a significant contribution to the field of PCS due to its focus on the lived experience of privilege, a previously under-studied phenomenon. Yet this research only offers small-scale insights into the way in which privilege is transmitted and reproduced in and through families at Valley View. Future endeavors could explore many other dimensions of this concept, and the way class-based characteristics are manifest in the ordinary operation of people's daily lives. Moreover, I believe an additional important project relating to my research at Valley View rests on the notion of confronting those who have more resources and opportunities about their own class and race-based privilege. I am curious to know how they might react, what feelings they have about their identities, how they might reconcile it in their heads, if they do in fact understand their social position as privilege, among many other questions. I believe privilege is a topic that people are

uncomfortable addressing, yet it is an important conversation to have, and I hope that this dissertation project can contribute to an on-going dialogue about this issue.

Appendix A: Theory and Literature Review

This project examines the relationship between social class, family life, swimming club participation, and physical activity through an in-depth, ethnographic investigation. Specifically, following Bourdieu (1978, 1984, 1986), this research argues that participation at the Valley View Swim and Tennis Club is illustrative of a white, upper-middle class privilege in which membership operates as a distinctive consumption choice illustrating familial capital and contributing to the reproduction of equally privileged future generations that will embody the same familial social class position in the future. This research is unique in that there has not been any previous research investigating this intersection, however there has been some sporadic academic work considering swimming, for instance Dukes and Coakley (2002) and Power and Woolger (1994) examined parental support of age group swimming; Gould et al. (1985) investigated attrition in youth swimming; Irwin et al. (2009) studied myths effecting minority swimming participation; Hastings et al. (2006) looked at drowning inequalities based on race and class; and Wiltse (2007) did a historical analysis of swimming and pools in the U.S. In addition, there is some related literature that examines the relationship between youth sport and family life and/or parental involvement (e.g. Baron, 2007; Coakley, 2004, 2006; Cote, 1999; Harrington, 2006; Holt, 2008; Kanters, Bocarro, & Casper, 2008; Kay, 2000, 2006a, 2006b, 2007; MacDonald et al., 2004; Murphy, 1999; Ryan, 1995; Stein, Raedeke, & Glenn, 1999; Weiss & Fretwell, 2005; Weiss, & Hayashi, 1995). However, much of this scholarship is based on smaller studies,

rather than larger, in-depth, ethnographic projects. Related ethnographic literature has examined youth sport, baseball, soccer, and tennis cultures. Specifically, Chafetz and Kotarba (1995) reported on the reproduction of gender through maternal labor in Little League baseball; Gmelch and Antonio (2001) discussed the way in which wives of professional baseball players manage their family lives; Grasmuck (2005) investigated how communities are shaped by youth baseball; Fine (1987) chronicled baseball players, parents, and coaches in Little League; Swanson (2003, 2009a, 2009b) examined mothers of youth soccer players; Thompson (1999) explored the lives of families in Australian youth tennis; and Messner (2009) uncovered the gendered implications imposed by the adult-directed world of youth team sports. Further, while not explicitly related to sport participation, Lareau's (2003) Bourdieuan ethnographic examination of the distinctive impact of social class and race on family life provided an important perspective informing this project.

Additionally, there are a number of empirically based examinations guided by Bourdieu's theories on social class, including the previously discussed research by Swanson (2003, 2009a, 2009b), Coakley (2006), and Dukes and Coakley (2002), but also the following work: Kay and Laberge (2002) appropriated habitus to describe corporate professionals' practice of adventure racing; Fletcher (2008) linked risk sports to social class position; Warde (2006) considered the how sport, exercise, and fitness are connected to social class and gender; Wacquant (1998) examined social class, boxing, and its relationship to an embodied habitus; White and Wilson (1999) conducted a quantitative study of class-based inequality and sport spectatorship; Foote (2003)

analyzed Tonya Harding's working-class, figure-skating identity; Frew and McGillivray (2005) investigated the relationship between physical capital and health club participation; Stempel (2005) used Bourdieu's concept of field to understand class-based sport participation; and Stempel (2006) considered the way in which sport participation is mediated by gender and social class. While not explicitly interrogating the relationship between social class, family, and swim club participation, all of the aforementioned scholarship has been instrumental in helping to construct the methodology and theoretical framework guiding this project. The following discusses Bourdieu's theorizing on social class reproduction; critiques of his work; his concepts of field, capital, and habitus; and his ideas on sport and the family. Further, the review below offers insights from relevant literature informing this project and examines the way in which social class, gender, and whiteness intersect and impact this research.

Bourdieu on Class

This research has appropriated French cultural theorist Pierre Bourdieu's ideas on social class in order to understand the operation of class-based power and privilege occurring at the Valley View Swim and Tennis Club. Bourdieu explains that social classes exist in social space, and "theoretically assemble agents who, being subject to similar conditions, tend to resemble one another and, as a result, are inclined to assemble practically, to come together as a practical group, and thus to reinforce their points of resemblance" (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 6). Classes, or "sets of agents who occupy similar positions," can be distinguished through similar practices, dispositions, and ideologies (Bourdieu, 1985b, p. 725). As such, Bourdieu argues that social class is defined by the

interplay and operation of various forms of capital and is thought to be a significant determinant of an individual's everyday experiences, understandings, and identities. He explains that social class is constructed through the dialectical relationship between field, capital, and habitus, and when taken together, accounts for all types of "social practices and representations" occurring in a particular context (Wacquant, 1989, p. 44). Capital is maintained in the family, an institution which attempts to either preserve or improve their social class position, often through maternal labor, and thus the ability to transmit and convert different types of capital in and through future generations facilitates class reproduction (Bourdieu, 1980, 1984, 1986). As a way to ensure the transmission of privilege is reproduced in the next generation, parents attempt to instill their children with their embodied habitus as subtleties of corporeal representation and distinctive tastes for particular goods and services illustrate social standing and cultural values (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984).

Bourdieu's "work has developed as a result of a creative engagement with classical sociology" (Shilling, 2003, p. 127). He was one of the first theorists to consider the relationship between sport participation and social class location, and positioned the body as a central focus as he believes it serves as an emblematic, constitutive depiction of social inequalities (Harvey & Sparks, 1991; Shilling, 2003). This "was a momentous recognition in the context of sport and body literature because it emphasized how bodily experience is somewhat determined" (Atkinson & Wilson, 2002, p. 388). Bourdieu "maintains a more comprehensive view of the materiality of human embodiment than those theorists who focus exclusively on language, consciousness, or

even the body as flesh” (Shilling, 2003, p. 112). Thus his scholarship certainly resonates with the Physical Cultural Studies (PCS) imperative to develop a “contextually based understanding of the corporeal practices, discourses, and subjectivities through which active bodies become organized, represented, and experienced in relation to the operations of social power” (Andrews, 2008, p. 55). Accordingly, Bourdieu’s theories regarding social class have been an invaluable framework to guide this ethnographic investigation.

Although Bourdieu’s understanding of social class position and its predictive relationship to embodied lifestyle characteristics, social practices, and distinctive behaviors has been crucial to the development of this research, and instrumental in forming conclusions, there are some notable critiques of his scholarship that should be acknowledged. First, Bourdieu’s theories are “diachronically underdeveloped,” and perhaps need updating in order to reflect modern society (Shilling, 2003, p. 127). One of the largest critiques of Bourdieu’s work is that his theorizing “entails a form of cultural determinism within which the agents of cultural practices, social classes, and power relations are properties of the system” (Hargreaves, 1982, p. 14). Bourdieu’s ideas on social class are quite structurally deterministic and rigid, and accordingly, he positions the reproduction of social relations as inevitable, rather than as the result of individual agency (Giulianotti, 2005; Hargreaves, 1982; LaBerge, 1995). Laberge (1995) critiques Bourdieu’s construction of habitus as an *unconscious* set of preferences comprising a lifestyle, an idea which again illustrates his outlook on the rigid relationship between habitus and social space. Further, Erikson (1996) argues that the dimensions

of social class position are both more complex and weaker than Bourdieu describes. According to Rahkonen (1999, p. 16), although Bourdieu discusses class in many of his studies, “he is more interested in elaborating relationships of domination or power than developing any class theory proper” (cited in Bairner, 2007, p. 26). In addition, Bourdieu operationalizes cultural capital in many different ways (to refer to music preferences, education, sport, etc.), yet does not offer a succinct definition of the term (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Prieur, Rosenlund, & Skjott-Larsen, 2008). Further, he indicates that the lower classes are not able to create distinctive, legitimate culture, again pre-determining the relationship between class and culture (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). For example, Bourdieu positions sport preferences as highly determined by class habitus, leaving little room for the evolution of anything other than class-based participation (Giulianotti, 2005; Hargreaves, 1982). Sport, like art or literature, represents a cultural field, yet Erikson (1996) argues that Bourdieu fails to adequately study or describe fields, and instead focuses too heavily to understanding lifestyles. In Bourdieu’s work, fields appear to be stable, closed social systems, however, upper-middle class cultures are generally involved in a multitude of social spaces, not just one, indicating that their class-based identity is not a “zero-sum game,” rather it is “made up of a number of partly overlapping spheres of competition and comparison,” an idea which Bourdieu’s depiction of field does not sufficiently account for (Lamont, 1992, p. 183).

Additionally, Bourdieu has been critically evaluated by Erikson (1996) on his understanding of social capital. She argues that both personal networks, “a major source of cultural resources and a more powerful source than class itself,” and work

relationships, “the fundamental site of class processes in their most direct form,” as they relate to social capital, are more important than Bourdieu discusses (Erikson, 1996, p. 217). In addition, while Bourdieu’s reference to embodied capital and the relation between sport and social class is one of the strengths of his work, his analysis and description regarding the acquisition of this physical capital by various constituents is weak (Shilling, 1991, 2003). According to Shilling (2003), Bourdieu is unconcerned with the biological functioning of the body, and thus his scholarship features an “underdeveloped view of the biological dimensions of human embodiment” (p. 129), and he does not provide any recourse for when an agent’s embodied habitus does not correspond to their social class position. Further, his analysis of the biological body is both heteronormative and androcentric as he maintains a particular perspective on gendered roles (Laberge, 1995). For instance Bourdieu explains there is an “opposition between the male body, self-enclosed and directed towards the outside world, and the female body, resembling the dark, damp house, full of food, utensils, and children” which is “the true principle of the organization of domestic space” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 92). Further, *Distinction*, in particular, paints a superficial picture of women, their role in the family, and their attitudes towards their corporeal appearance. However, while these critiques are all somewhat valid, even Bourdieu’s critics acknowledge the usefulness of his work in forming a complex understanding of how social class impacts lives and lifestyles. It is also important to note that this project appropriated Bourdieu’s theories only when useful, and did not try and fit the findings to Bourdieu’s ideas, rather invoked Bourdieu to explain particular phenomena.

Field

Bourdieu discussed three important, dialectically related ideas crucial to the construction of social class: field, habitus, and capital (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Fields, or fields of cultural production, are the “social space of objective relationships,” or fluid contexts where individuals and their social positions interact (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 16). They are networks or systems of relations that structure social positions of power within which agents attempt to maintain or improve their social status (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Wacquant, 1989). The cultural field represents agents and their social practices as they relate to their social class position, and “can be described as a multi-dimensional space of positions ... whose values correspond to the values of the different pertinent variables” (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 724). Fields are defined by particular contexts, such as sport and/or leisure, and therefore members belong to a particular field due to a shared, common belief for the field itself (DeFrance, 1995). Bourdieu explains that hierarchical relationships exist within a field as members “constantly work to differentiate themselves from their closest rivals in order to reduce competition” and establish their place and legitimacy in the field (Wacquant, 1989, p. 39). The field of production is responsible for one’s embodied habitus as it is “‘at home’ in the field it inhabits,” and thus it is perceived as “immediately as endowed with meaning and interest” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 128). The connection between field and habitus is important as all social practices and representations occur based on this relation (Wacquant, 1989).

Habitus, Taste, and Distinction

To study a field it is necessary to analyze the habitus of the agents in the field as there is an “ontological complicity” that exists through bodies and institutions (Wacquant, 1989, p. 56; see also Bourdieu, 1984, Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Class habitus is a durable system of structuring tastes and preferences for certain practices and dispositions which contribute to the development of a particular, classifiable lifestyle, and it is acquired through personal understanding of one’s actual social, cultural, and economic status (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984). Habitus “is a general, transposable disposition which carries out a systematic, universal application—beyond the limits of what has been directly learnt-of the necessity inherent in the learning conditions” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170), and thus accounts for “practice in its humblest of forms—rituals, matrimonial choices, the mundane economic conduct of everyday life, etc.” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 121). It is the general formula of lifestyle that constructs class-based practices and behaviors, and thus characterizes distinctive lifestyles based on social position (Bourdieu, 1980). Bourdieu (1977) does recognize that there are individual differences across social class groupings, however explains that members of the same class will have encountered more similar experiences with each other than they will have with members of a different class, and consequently argues that habitus helps articulate lifestyle practices with social position. One’s habitus will find a sense of matching with others with a similar habitus in “a sort of mutual acculturation” which is based in “the immediate affinities which orient social encounters, discouraging socially discordant relationships, encouraging well-matched

relationships, without these operations ever having to be formulated other than in the socially innocent language of likes and dislikes” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 243). Therefore, habitus implies a “‘sense of one's place’ but also a ‘sense of the place of others’” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 18). It is important to recognize that habitus constructs “a world that seems self-evident” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 19), and one which is “taken for granted” due to the synchronization and reinforcement of similar class-based lifestyle experiences (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 80). By way of habitus, one’s practices unconsciously become synonymous and “harmonized” with their social class position (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 80).

Through its generative history, habitus involves both a system that produces and governs particular practices and dispositions comprising a lifestyle (Bourdieu, 1984, 1989). Class habitus becomes an important concept as it is both a “practice-unifying and practice-generating principle,” structuring lifestyle practices that individuals or families take part in (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 101). Thus, distinctive lifestyle behaviors and taste, the art of differentiating, are products of one’s habitus (Bourdieu, 1967, 1984). Bourdieu argues that taste “is what brings together things and people that go together” (1984, p. 241), and thus the logic of the field of cultural production is based on the idea that social classes can garner distinction through preferences for goods and services that “suit their position” (1989, p. 19). Distinction “is the difference inscribed in the very structure of the social space” (Bourdieu, 1985b, p. 731), and accordingly, the lifestyle practices and consumption of rare or different cultural goods are a way in which agents differentiate themselves from others (Bourdieu, 1984). However, preferences

for these lifestyle defining products are not intentional choices, rather they are unconscious tastes relative to one's taken-for-granted class status (Bourdieu, 1984). Distinctive preferences at all social positions can only exist in and through each other as this relationship is responsible for creating "the value of culture and the need to possess it" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 250). Consequently, distinction becomes a symbolic capital, legitimated through the internalization or embodiment of a class-based affinity for particular cultural goods and products (Bourdieu, 1984, 1987).

Accordingly, Bourdieu believes "that the body is the most indisputable materialization of class taste" (1984, p. 190), and describes habitus as an *embodied* disposition responsible for distinguishing social class position (Bourdieu, 1978, 1984, 1985a). Habitus is made clear through a class-based "relation to the body at its deepest and most unconscious level, i.e. body schema, which is the depository of a whole world view and a whole philosophy of the person and the body" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 218). Bourdieu explains the acquisition of embodied capital as "external wealth converted into an integral part of the person, into a habitus" (1986, p. 245). He believes that even the most insignificant details of corporeal representation can reveal how people treat and relate to their bodies, and thereby demonstrate their distinctive social position and class habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984; Shilling, 1991). Therefore, the body serves as a social product, and through fitness, manners, practices, etc., offers a illustration of social class position and can be utilized to garner distinction.

Capital

Bourdieu argues that an individual's position in a field, demonstrated through their embodied habitus, is formed through "the distribution of the specific forms of capital" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 108). Accordingly, Bourdieu's understanding of social class relies on the idea that the accumulation of capital can distinguish lifestyles in subtle, but meaningful ways, as capital is the "generative formula of the habitus" (1984, p. 208), and "determines the actual or potential powers within the different fields and the chances of access to the specific profits that they offer" (1985, p. 725). Bourdieu (1987) believes that agents occupy their place in the field based on the way their capital is distributed within social space:

in the first dimension according to the global *volume* of capital they possess, in the second dimension according to the *composition* of their capital, that is, according to the relative weight in their overall capital of the various forms of capital especially economic and cultural, and in the third dimension according to the evolution in time of the volume and composition of their capital, that is, according to their *trajectory* in social space. (p. 4)

These dimensions of capital determine social class position (Bourdieu, 1984, 1985, 1986). The distribution of various forms of capital become valuable when agents recognize its meaning and consequently define the structure of the field, a social space for the cultural production of the habitus (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986). Bourdieu (1986) describes capital as either materialized, objectified, or embodied, and notes that it accumulates over time and has the "potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form, contains a tendency to persist in its being, is a force inscribed in the objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible" (p. 241). Classes distinguish themselves based on the way in

which their relative combinations of capitals define their privilege and offer them both power and freedom in their lives (Bourdieu, 1984).

Bourdieu (1980, 1984, 1986) discusses economic, cultural, and social as the three major forms of capital dictating social class position and defining power and profit in the cultural field. First, economic capital is recognized as a sign of distinction and refers to financial status, wealth, assets, and the time and money to devote to leisure pursuits (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986). Economic capital is significant as it marks one's "distance from necessity" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 177). Various forms of capital can be derived from economic capital and therefore it has the ability to transform into different types (including cultural, social, and physical) (Bourdieu, 1986). Economic capital is an important structuring structure in the construction of one's habitus. Secondly, social capital refers to social network, prestige, and authority that an individual demonstrates through peers, friends, and skills. According to Bourdieu (1986):

Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit in the various senses of the word. (p. 248-9)

Bourdieu explains that social capital has a "multiplier effect" on one's collective capital (1986, p. 249), and it demonstrates "successful management" of all capital possessed (1996, p. 24). Bourdieu (1986) also indicates that to reproduce social capital, those who have it must engage in "an unceasing effort of sociability, [and] a continuous series of exchanges" (p. 250) in order to maintain and increase this capital, as social networks are not a given, rather they are the product of the concerted effort of families to

(re)produce “lasting, useful relationships that can secure material or symbolic profits” (p. 249). And thirdly, cultural capital refers to the culturally valued tastes and consumption patterns an individual accumulates through their social standing. Cultural capital is gained “quite unconsciously,” and often times unrecognized as capital but rather as a “legitimate competence” bringing those who possess it distinction (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 245). Children tend to acquire it at an early age through the family where its “diffuse, continuous transmission ... escapes observation and control,” thus functioning as a hidden indicator of social class position and contributing to the cycle of class reproduction (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 254). Accordingly, cultural capital “cannot be transmitted instantaneously,” rather it requires time and a concerted labor in order to ensure successful transmission (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 245).

Cultural capital “is linked to the body and presupposes embodiment,” and is augmented through time “invested” on the part of the individual to cultivate the body in a certain way (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244). “Embodiment is never neutral” (Hargreaves & Vertinsky, 1997, p. 10), as bodies depict “social relations of particular significance for the way power is structured” (Hargreaves, 1987, p.139). Thus the body, a social product, illustrates social position through particular class-based corporeal representations, practices, and behaviors (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1988). Bodies can be modified in order to garner distinction, and the way in which an individual controls and presents their corporeal appearance is a marker of their moral worth as the body is “the only tangible manifestation of the ‘person’ [and] is commonly perceived as the most natural expression of innermost nature” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 192). For example, dominant

classes, in particular, believe “the body is an end in itself,” and therefore understand the symbiotic relationship between particular physically active pursuits and health (Giulianotti, 2005, p. 162-3). The way in which an individual relates to their own body is expressed in certain ways, for instance bodily comportment and outward displays of confidence demonstrate very “visible traces of early and recurrent exposure” to distinctive class experiences, and operate as a “powerful social marker” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 252).

Accordingly Bourdieu alludes to a crucial fourth capital, physical capital: the power of the body to differentiate itself through embodied practices, activities, and behaviors (Bourdieu, 1980, 1984; Frew & McGillivray, 2005; Shilling, 1991, 2003). Shilling (2003) argues that “fields bestow value directly on a specific bodily form, activity or performance ... effectively creating a category of physical capital” (p. 121). Specifically, physical capital “refers to the *social formation* of bodies by individuals through sporting, leisure, and other activities in ways which express a class location and which are accorded symbolic value” (Shilling, 1991, p. 654, emphasis in original). Not only does physical capital signify social class position, but it also offers individuals distinctive opportunities to convert it into other forms of capital (Shilling, 1991). Physical capital, and its subsequent transmission, conversion, and reproduction techniques, is a somewhat hidden resource, so often times members of the upper-classes spend time and money for their children to participate in elite physical cultural activities which “which stress manners and deportment and hence facilitate the future acquisition of social and cultural capital” (Shilling, 1991, p. 656). The classed body is

cultivated and groomed for particular activities illustrative of social status, and accordingly, upper-classes invest in their own bodies and their children's bodies in order to demonstrate their embodied class position (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984; Shilling, 2003). The "healthy body has been rendered a conspicuous symbolic expression of lifestyle choice, morality, and thereby status," and thus becomes a source of distinction and differentiation (Andrews et al., 1997, p. 271). Therefore through physical capital, members of the dominant class are able to "*define their orientations towards the body and lifestyles as superior, worthy of reward, and as, metaphorically and literally, the embodiment of class*" (Shilling, 1991, p. 657, emphasis in original).

Sport and Social Class

Embodied behavior and corporeal representation define the relationship between sport and social class as "the body constitutes the corporeal core of all human action," and "bodily practices comprise the central features of engagement in physical activity" (Loy, 1991, p. 119). Sport participation is dictated by economic and cultural capital as well as a class-based relationship individuals have with their bodies at "the deepest and most unconscious level" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 218). Bourdieu argues:

The logic whereby agents incline towards this or that sporting practice cannot be understood unless their dispositions toward sport, which are themselves one dimension of a *particular relation to the body*, are reinserted into the unity of a system of dispositions, the *habitus*, which is the basis from which life-styles are generated. (1978, p. 833, emphasis in original)

This connection individuals experience with their body, or "body schema," defines their habitus, or "the depository of a whole world view and a whole philosophy of the person and the body" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 218). Accordingly, class preferences for particular

sports “receive their social significance” based on the perceived intrinsic and extrinsic benefits they will bring the participant in relation to their body (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 209). Bourdieu reveals that “a sport is more likely to be adopted by a social class if it does not contradict that class’s relation to the body at its deepest and most unconscious level” (1984, p. 218). For instance, upper classes experience their lives in a culture of privilege and demonstrate this through an effortless exhibition and a distinguishing conspicuous consumption of the material world around them. They pursue sports such as skiing, tennis, and golf in exclusive private places with specific partners, characteristics which demonstrate a “highly controlled social exchange” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 217). The middle classes focus their lives around cultural promotion which is evident through the status production of a socially driven, controlled, and presentable existence. They are concerned with cultivating their bodies, and demonstrate this through sport participation that emphasizes a level of self-control over their diet, corporeal appearance, and social status. Thus, their sporting interests revolve around physical fitness activities which are “mainly pursued for their health-maintaining functions and their social profits” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 212). Finally the lower class exists in a culture of poverty that values instantaneous gratification and economic reward, and experiences an instrumental relation towards their bodies. This is manifest in their predilection for certain physical activities, such as boxing, that are characterized by “a high investment of energy, effort or even pain,” and often, bodily contact (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 213).

Bourdieu’s understanding of the relationship between sport and social class indicates that participation in private sport communities, such as swimming clubs, can

contribute to one's social standing by positioning "the body-for-others," distinguishing those maintaining a privileged lifestyle, and transferring valuable skills, characteristics, and social connections to children (1978, p. 838). Participation in leisure activities in private venues offers distinction, or symbolic capital, as the ability to spend both time and money demonstrates social standing (Bourdieu, 1980, 1984). Swimming is a middle to upper-middle class sporting pursuit as it requires one to possess economic, social, and cultural capital, and it has the unique quality of lacking an age-limit, accordingly demonstrating more prestige and exclusivity (Bourdieu, 1978, 1980, 1984; Shilling, 1991). Swimming, particularly as a leisure pursuit, tends to take place in private, restricted places, with specific partners, and requires a "high investment" coupled with a "freely determined" level of "physical exertion," and can be practiced throughout the life course (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 217). In addition, membership at a swim club can facilitate physical fitness and social profit, and maintains hidden entry requirements such as family tradition, early training, clothing, and techniques of sociability, all of which add to its distinctiveness (Bourdieu, 1978, 1984).

Generally speaking, youth sport involvement, including swimming participation, can express and reinforce familial social class position as "the more privileged one's family is, the more likely it is that the children will be involved in organized sports" (Messner, 2009, p. 12). This is exemplified through the relationship between youth soccer and the middle class as children's participation simultaneously reaffirms suburban middle class lifestyles, and advances moral and cultural superiority (Andrews et al., 1997). Andrews (1999) argues that soccer "enunciates the dominant rhythms and

regimes of suburban existence” (p. 31), as it has the “right type of corporeal aesthetic” (p.48) illustrative of class habitus. Swanson (2009b) found that mothers used their social class privilege and their sons’ participation in youth soccer in order to reproduce “good kids” that will be successful in the future. Overall, parents invest in enriching opportunities, such as youth sport participation, for their children in order to ensure that they have the right social experiences that will benefit them later in their lives (Messner, 2009; Pugh, 2009; Rosenfeld & Wise, 2000). Sport offers parents and children quality time to bond; a safe, supervised structure for children’s free time; an opportunity to learn valuable skills such as teamwork, commitment, and responsibility; and a way to understand winning and losing (Coakley, 2004, 2006; Messner, 2009; Murphy, 1999). Further, parents want their children to be physically active, and youth sport gives children an excellent chance to get exercise, health benefits, and form lifelong physical activity patterns (Coakley, 2004, 2006; Dunn et al., 2003; Messner, 2009; Murphy, 1999; Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Parents believe they are fulfilling their moral responsibilities when they enroll their children in organized sports programs (Coakley, 2006), and accordingly, family influences involvement and achievement in sport (Cote, 1999), and in turn, sport contributes to family time, satisfaction, and togetherness (Coakley, 2006; Harrington, 2006; Kay, 2000, 2006a, 2006b, 2007; Sabo & Veliz, 2008). In addition, sport and leisure contexts provide opportunities for families to spend time together as well as offer an additional demonstration of their family habitus, as sport, lifestyle, and social class are linked (Bourdieu, 1978, 1984; Coakley, 2006; Kay, 2006a, 2006b, Harrington, 2006; Sabo & Veliz, 2008). Often family recreation occurs

during family time, and “is highly valued because it is thought to protect the stability and cohesiveness of the conjugal family group” (Shaw, 1992, p. 272). Participating in leisure activities together promotes a “sense of family” and togetherness (Shaw & Dawson, 2001, p. 224), as physical spaces offer a site to “practice family” (DeVault, 2000, p. 501). Further, leisure time functions as a good way to teach children life skills and family values through the demonstration of particular recreational practices and behaviors (Ostrander, 1984; Shaw & Dawson, 2001).

Defining the Family and the Family Habitus

Sport participation tends to be a salient feature of family life as values, skills, practices, and beliefs are transmitted through families. Bourdieu (1996) defines the family as “a set of related individuals linked either by alliance (marriage) or filiation, or, less commonly, by adoption (legal relationship), and living under the same roof (cohabitation)” (p.19). He explains that nothing is more natural or universal than the arbitrary social construction of the family, and in fact, the development of one’s habitus begins during childhood through connections with family and other close social relationships (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1996; Erikson, 1991). Bourdieu (1984, 1996) believes that the family unit is extraordinarily powerful and consequently responsible for both social and biological reproduction of the social order, social space, and social relations. Often this is because marriage, to begin with, reproduces the social structure as it tends to be between partners of the same social class status (Bourdieu, 1984; Ehrenreich, 1989; Erikson, 1991). The families at Valley View adhere to the definition of the SNAF, a family structured with legal heterosexual marriage of a man and woman, in

which the man is the main breadwinner, and the woman, while she may be in paid employment, is primarily responsible for maintaining the household and custodial care of children (Smith, 1993). While this family structure is no longer present in the majority of American families, it is still considered a “highly visible hegemonic ideal” (Messner, 2009, p. 176). The “SNAF anchors individuals in a privileged social/spatial configuration and activates a distinctive range of spaces that distribute social benefits so as to reproduce North American hierarchies of gender, racial/ethnic, class, and sexual privilege” (DeVault, 2003, p. 1297). Bourdieu (1996) explains that this arbitrary, but nonetheless normal, naturalized concept of the family has become “a privilege instituted into a universal norm” (p. 23), and offers those who subscribe to it a social advantage, over and above their other social class indicators, as “family identity [is] one of the most powerful principles of perception of the social world and one of the most real social units” (p. 25). This advantage, Bourdieu (1977) argues, is acquired because the family offers children formative learning experiences in that they witness “the true principle of the organization of domestic space” (p. 92), in which men and women demonstrate a “sexual division of work” (p. 91). The SNAF, as an advantaged institution, leads to the reproduction of both social class and embodied gender positions in and through children, and thus becomes the most important and prominent mechanism to facilitate the process by which class-based privilege is transmitted to future generations (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1996). Families “tend, unconsciously and consciously, to maintain or increase their assets and consequently to maintain or improve their position in the class structure” through their relative volume of capitals, possession of

reconversion “instruments,” and power relations between themselves and other social classes (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 125). The family “is one of the key sites” for the accumulation, reconversion, transmission, and subsequent reproduction of their respective social class position (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 23).

This SNAF structure is a taken for granted notion as it appears so normal and has existed for so long, a fact which, for those who have it, adds to familial power and the reproduction of social class privilege. Bourdieu (1996) explains that “one of the properties of dominant social fractions is that they have particularly extensive families ... that are strongly integrated because they are united not only by the affinity between *habitus* but also by the solidarity of interests” (p. 24, emphasis in original). Accordingly, privileged classes are permitted to stay dominant because of their ability to conserve and reproduce class-based power relations between themselves and others. Upper-income families function to educate children about their particular cultural beliefs and practices, and construct their tastes and preferences, and thus the institution of the family is “one of the constituent elements of our *habitus*, a mental structure which, having been inculcated into all brains socialized in a particular way, is both individual and collective” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 21). Within the family there is an intergenerational transmission of social class privilege through children who learn their family and class *habitus*, receive particular forms and volumes of capitals, and develop a taste for particular goods and services (Bourdieu, 1984). The family “functions, in *habitus*, as a classificatory scheme and a principle of the construction of the social world and of that particular social body, the family, a principle which is acquired within a family existing as

a realized fiction” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 21). Bourdieu alludes to the idea of a family habitus which operates as a structuring structure, extends to schooling; sports and recreation; practices and beliefs; and forms tastes and distinctive lifestyle patterns (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1996). The family habitus allows an understanding of American family life as it “refers to a historically and socially situated system of dispositions and the family activities associated with them” (Coakley, 2006, p. 160; see also Dukes & Coakley, 2002). Further, the family habitus is “a belief system and lifestyle that encompass[s] identifiable dispositions and practices related to social class, family life, parenting, [and] child development” (Coakley, 2006, p. 160). Specifically, it entails a class-based lifestyle which defines the operation of family lives and parenting practices which function to facilitate the transmission and reproduction of social class privilege, including the acquisition of various types of capital and lifestyle characteristics (Coakley, 2006; Dukes & Coakley, 2002). Additionally, the family habitus involves the employment of collective familial capital, including economic, social, cultural, and physical, in order to transmit, convert, and reproduce social class position. The upper-middle class family habitus implicates parents as “directly responsible and even legally accountable for the behaviours and achievements/failures of their children ... [and] entails the interrelated notions that child development is important, that development ultimately depends on the actions of parents” (Coakley, 2006, p. 161). While little academic attention has been given to the concept of a family habitus, it has been used to describe middle and upper-middle class families by Dukes and Coakley (2002), who examined parental involvement in competitive youth swimming, and located familial

commitment in their family habitus; as well as Coakley (2006), who theorized that family participation and support of youth sport is grounded in the family habitus. The family habitus may be helpful in understanding social and cultural factors structuring contemporary American family life (Coakley, 2006; Dukes & Coakley, 2002).

Given the family emphasis on the cycle of class reproduction, many parents try and spend time together as an intact family unit so as to transmit valuable capitals, skills, and values to children. Parents strive to create this type of family experience because family togetherness can be a source of pleasure, comfort, and represent an established family unit, and therefore the investment in family time is made to transmit and reproduce particular family and class-based values in future generations (Bourdieu, 1984; Daly, 1996; DeVault, 2000). Interestingly however, there is a dearth of research that investigates the constructions of family time (Daly, 1996). Daly (1996) explains the concept of family time as a theory of the “socially constructed essence of time” (p. 16), and notes that time spent between family members is important, and “has a strong flavor of sentimentality that is rooted in notions of togetherness, intensive interaction, and pride” (p. 66). Time is valued in our society, and the demonstration of free time, particularly to devote to leisure activities, is a marker of social status (Bourdieu, 1984).

Reproduction of Gender

As discussed, the family unit is an institution responsible for transmitting various privileges to children, and as such, it is important to consider the intersectionality between social class, gender, and race, particularly as it relates to the families at Valley View. As discussed, the women and children who took part in this research are mostly

white and upper-middle class, thus gender will be discussed in the context of race and class privilege. Gender, particularly in middle and upper-middle class families, is significant as mothers and fathers play very different roles which shape the totality of their family lives, including their social class status, childrearing ideologies, and parenting practices. The family is the central unit that reproduces women's subordinate roles (Chodorow, 1999), yet women's maternal labor is necessary to maintain, transmit, and reproduce social class privilege through successive generations (Bourdieu, 1984; Ostrander, 1984; Silva, 2005).

Based on this ideology, Lareau (2003) argues that mothers from the dominant classes use their social class privilege in order to intervene in their children's lives to garner opportunities on their behalf. Through their work, mothers "activate and effectively produce distinctive public worlds for their children" (DeVault, 2003, p. 1303). Accordingly, women often spend more time with children than fathers do, and are responsible for the daily and custodial care of children and the organization of familial schedules and activities (Craig, 2006; Daly, 1996; Lareau, 2000, 2003; Ostrander, 1984; Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Maternal and paternal responsibilities differ by type and the amount of time spent performing them (Craig, 2006). For example, mothers, not fathers, are often charged with driving children to various activities, making food, doing laundry, assisting with homework, and maintaining the household (Chafetz & Kotarba, 1995; Dunn et al., 2003; Thompson, 1999). Fathers tend to perform more of the "fun" (Craig, 2006, p. 275), and "playful" (Lareau, 2000, p. 422) childrearing tasks, while mothers are stressed managing their children, households, and sometimes careers

(Arendell, 1999, 2000; Craig, 2006; Lareau, 2000; Pescowitz, 2005; Villani, 1997).

Fathers find their time with children is less work and more play, and are not coming close to equaling women's time in child care roles (Craig, 2006; Lareau, 2000; Wall & Arnold, 2007). This discrepancy in maternal versus paternal care is certainly not the case in every family, however it does have significant consequences regarding women's intentions to engage in paid work outside the home (Craig, 2006), as statistics show that 76% of mothers of infants and over 60% of mothers with young children do not work full time (Pescowitz, 2005). Overall, the family labor women perform can validate and reinforce traditional gender-appropriate roles in children, as well as demonstrate to them what women do on behalf of their families as the family context offers children formative learning experiences (Chafetz & Kotarba, 1995; Thompson, 1999). This division of labor creates embodied "durable gendered dispositions" (Silva, 2005, p. 92), and thus, serves as an agent for the reproduction of embodied gender identities in children, and subsequently is responsible for the reproduction of social and biological relations (Bourdieu, 1977).

Women's family labor in the dominant classes is important to their social class position, and accordingly, mothers are often highly involved in their children's education and activities, active in the community, and supportive of their husband's career and professional engagements (Ostrander, 1984). Mothers, in particular, feel responsible for the emotional dimensions of their children's lives, and often this sentiment serves as impetus for women to leave the labor force and stay home to raise their children (Boyd, 2002; Villani, 1997). However, staying home can make women feel undervalued by

society, their husbands, and their community (Freeman et al, 2006; Rubin 2007; Wearing, 1989; Zimmerman, 2000). Women receive messages that they are wasting their educations and have a hard time adjusting to being “just a mom” (Rubin, 2007, p. 342). Yet many women recognize that they are able to offer their children intangible experiences because they are not at work or have flexible schedules. For example, mothers tend to be the parent involved in schools, and consequently they reproduce their social class position as they employ their economic, social, and cultural resources on behalf of their children (Lareau, 2003; Reay, 2005). Women’s labor and intervention in their children’s lives helps to shape their communities into places that other people want to raise their children, yet again, it contributes to the reproduction of gendered ideologies and hierarchies (Messner, 2009; Petrzalka & Mannon, 2006). Mothers who are highly involved in their children’s activities tend to be upper-middle class, white, and have flexible schedules either working part-time or not at all, as they need time and energy to devote to their efforts (Langman, 1987; McGrath & Kuriloff, 1999). Women in this social class position believe that their involvement in the school system is important to their children’s ultimate success (Freeman, 2004). The way in which mothers from the dominant classes navigate institutional rules not only demonstrates an embodied sense of self-confidence, but also expresses social and cultural capital, thereby indicating exposure to particular distinctive class experiences during their own formative years, as well as from expertise gained in their present or former lives as career women (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984; Messner, 2009). These experiences lead mothers

to feel “empowered to intervene” in their children’s lives (Reay, 2005, p. 111; see also Lareau, 2003).

Further, as it pertains to sport participation, often mothers make large sacrifices in their own lives to make time to drive kids around to practices and competitions, do laundry, engage in travel, and cook food, and do not expect to be thanked for their contribution (Chafetz & Kotarba, 1995; Swanson 2003; Thompson, 1999). This devotion to children’s sport is an effort to produce ‘good kids’ for their fathers, an outcome which validates their role as a ‘good wife’ and a ‘good mother’ (Chafetz & Kotarba, 1995; Swanson 2003; Thompson, 1999). This type of behavior effectively reinforces and reproduces gender roles in families as it teaches boys, in particular, what women should do for them (Chafetz & Kotarba, 1995). Often this maternal support, however, is a hidden form of service, as fathers are just as socially visible, in particular at sporting events, thereby making women’s labor invisible (Thompson, 1999; Reay, 2005; Swanson, 2009a). Maternal commitment to children’s education and activities ensures the future success of their children and thus serves to reproduce familial privilege and social class status.

Accordingly, women feel as though they do not have time for and/or are not entitled to leisure time due to their family responsibilities (Daly, 1996; Deem, 1986; Harrington & Dawson, 1995; Henderson & Allen, 1991; Henderson & Dialeschki, 1991). In general, women’s leisure time is “highly constrained,” particularly when compared to men’s (Henderson & Dialeschki, 1991, p. 54). However, participation in the labor force has also been described as an impetus for women’s feeling of entitlement to leisure

time (Deem, 1986; Henderson & Dialeschki, 1991). Women who work part-time appear to have it best as their work tends to augment their self-esteem, but their hours leave them feeling less constrained and frantic (Harrington & Dawson, 1995). In addition, economic capital allows women to engage in leisure time as they have the financial freedom to hire home and child care (Deem, 1986; Freeman et al., 2006). Leisure time can be an excellent way to balance responsibilities, and tends to reinvigorate women, helping them maintain “a sense of self” (Bialeschki & Michener, 1994, p. 69). Further, while women’s leisure can reinforce gendered roles and behavior, it can also serve to resist the patriarchal culture which has constructed their lives, as women both tend to take leisure with their children, and play an important role in determining their children’s recreational habits (Deem, 1986; Green, 1998; Howard & Madrigal, 1990; Shaw, 1992). Women’s leisure sites can be a significant context for the formation of community, to build friendships, and to engage in relaxation (Deem, 1986; Green, 1998).

Conversely, while leisure might be emerging as an important mothering context, fathering in recreational settings offers the opportunity for strong paternal bonds, and has been identified as a powerful way for men to spend time with their children through shared experience (Coakley, 2006; Harrington, 2006; Kay, 2006a, 2006b, 2007). Traditionally, feminized contexts, such as church, school, and childcare, have prohibited men’s involvement in their children’s lives, yet leisure settings have the potential to increase father-child interaction and time together (Coakley, 2006; Kay, 2007).

Embodying Whiteness

In addition to classed and gendered understandings of Valley View, it is critical to examine how the construct of race intersects with the social relations occurring in the private pool environment. Historically, minorities and members of the lower class have essentially been excluded from participating in swimming due to class and race-based issues of access and other accompanying social factors (Hastings et al., 2006). For example, adding credence to this claim, the racial make-up of youth members of USA swimming is 92.5% Caucasian (Irwin et al., 2009). Accordingly, youth swimming ability increases with household income and parental education (Irwin et al., 2009), and the majority of competitive youth swimmers come from affluent backgrounds with married parents who are homeowners with secure, stable jobs, and physically active lifestyles (Dukes & Coakley, 2002). Conversely, African Americans report the least ability to swim of any ethnic group (Gilchrist et al., 2000), as well as the lowest rates of swimming participation (Hastings et al., 2006). This group also has the highest drowning rate of any other racial category, with the majority of fatalities seen in low income children, making the race and class-based implications doubly confounding (Saluja et al., 2006).

Wiltse (2007) examines this race and class based exclusivity from a socio-historical perspective, and explains that in the 1950s many white Americans abandoned municipal pools as they were desegregated due to a fear about “black men and white women swimming together” (p. 156). However, they did not stop swimming, rather “they built private pools, both club and residential, and swam in them instead. Racial integration was not the only cause of the dramatic proliferation of private swimming

pools after the early 1950s, but it was a direct and immediate cause” (Wiltse, 2007, p. 180). Not only was this a racial issue, but a class-based one as well, given that private pools signal the possession of economic, cultural, social, and physical capital. Many Americans had a “desire to recreate within more socially selective communities,” and belonging to a club “ensured that other swimmers would be of the same social class and race” (Wiltse, 2007, p. 183). Bluntly, Wiltse (2007) argues that in this era, the “primary appeal of club pools, however, was the assurance of not having to swim with black Americans” (p.195). This trend was particularly prevalent in the area of the U.S. that Valley View is located, as many white, upper-income Americans belonged to private facilities “precisely because they did not want to swim in socially unrestricted waters,” and preferred the restricted access of clubs that controlled the demographic characteristics of the membership (Wiltse, 2007, p. 193). The county that Valley View is located in offers a particularly interesting record as it pertains to swimming club culture. According to Wiltse (2007), there was a long history of cost-prohibitive neighborhoods and community associations excluding non-whites purely based on their economic condition, however, in the 1960s this all changed as black families began moving into these neighborhoods due to employment with agencies in the surrounding metropolitan area. Therefore, the exclusionary practices of pools in this area became even more limited. Fifty years later, while pools in the town and county where Valley View is located do not exclude anyone who can afford to pay, Valley View’s membership base still does not appear to be too diverse, thus demonstrating the historical race and class-

based exclusivity partially responsible for the underrepresentation of minorities participating in swimming, either as a sport or form of leisure.

Appropriately, swimming participation is anchored within the social construction of whiteness, a position defined by privilege, dominance, and wealth (Coleman, 1996; Darnell, 2007; Hartigan, 1997). Long and Hylton (2005) state that white privilege “reinforces difference and ‘race’ at the same time as normalizing this advantaged position for White people in sport” (p. 96). Whiteness is rarely considered as an issue, yet is continually replicated in and through physical culture, particularly in more exclusive sports such as golf, tennis, swimming, and skiing (Coleman, 1996; Darnell, 2007; Long & Hylton, 2002). McDonald (2005) explains that whiteness is not predictable, rather it is “a fluid set of practices that simultaneously produce identifications with and are imperfectly reiterated by bodies, especially ‘white’ bodies, with important consequences in regard to life, opportunity, and psychic security” (p. 251). Whiteness is “a complex, often contradictory, construction: ubiquitous, yet invisible; normalized and normative; universal, but always localized; unmarked, yet privileged” (King, 2005, p. 399). Whiteness is constructed, in part, through an understanding of what it means to embody a nonwhite position (Wander, Martin, & Nakayama, 2005), as regimes of both privilege and oppression are constructed based on how “the colour of an individual’s skin enters into the value placed on their bodies” (Shilling, 2003, p. 129). Accordingly, it is crucial to understand how whiteness is appropriated by those who embody it. White people rarely understand this identity to be an issue, thus adding to its invisibility, and the reproduction of white privilege (Boyd,

2008; Douglas, 2005; Giroux, 1997; Hartigan, 1997; Long & Hylton, 2005; Rothenberg, 2005). Many white people understand their own lives and privilege as “racially neutral,” rather than as shaped by race, which they are, and thus they do not to examine it any further (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 49). White ethnicity tends to be embodied with little regard for the racialized other (Dalton, 2005). Yet, white people often benefit from the taken for granted organization of society (Boyd, 2008; Hartigan, 1997; Rothenberg, 2005), and are continually “enlisted” in the operation of privilege and oppression, both “materially and ideologically” (Frankenberg, 1994, p. 75). Whiteness and “exclusion ... shape the cultural field(s) that white Americans now inhabit” (Frankenberg, 1994, p. 75).

Intersections

Valley View, as a physical space, operates as cultural field where membership is garnered through the employment of various capitals, and participation contributes to the production of the habitus. Thus, like any sport space, it is “highly gendered, classed, and raced” (Fusco, 2005, p. 286), and, as Green (1998) asserts, often “gender and class,” and I argue race as well, “are constituted in relation to particular places” (p. 177). It is important to consider how embodied dimensions of class, gender, and race dominance interact to reproduce privilege (Frankenberg, 1994). The body, a social product, can depict “social struggles and it is in the battle for control over the body that types of social relations of particular significance for the way power is structured—class, gender, age, and race—are to a great extent constituted” (Hargreaves, 1987, p.139). Therefore it is critical to understand how the constructs of social class, gender, and race intersect

to transform lives as they “take shape in relation to one another” (Coleman, 1996, p. 585). Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, and Roberts (1979) explain:

Race is the modality in which class is lived. It is also the medium in which class relations are experienced ... it has consequences for the whole class, whose relation to their conditions of existence is now systematically transformed by race. (p. 394)

Thus, race is always experienced through social class position, and as Harrison (1995) believes, gendered identities as well. The relationship between upper-middle class families and the institutions of youth sport and/or private club membership can be read through the lens of white privilege, yet often members of privileged communities commonly “fail to acknowledge the routine ways that class, race, and gender privilege creates insiders and outsiders ... and internal cohesion and external boundaries” (Messner, 2009, p. 201). As it relates to Valley View, it is crucial to consider the way in which gender and whiteness shape the upper-middle class social privilege experienced by the member families. Accordingly, following Bourdieu (1978, 1984, 1986), participation at Valley View is illustrative of a particular privileged, white, upper-middle class family habitus. Membership operates as a distinctive consumption choice offering families a strategic opportunity to express, promote, reconvert, and transmit their varied levels of economic, social, cultural, and physical capital, with the goal of reproducing equally privileged future generations that will embody the same familial social class position in the future.

Appendix B: Research Design and Methodology

As evidenced in this dissertation document, I utilized ethnographic methods to study the Valley View Swim and Tennis Club. Silk (2005) advocates ethnography as a promising research strategy in the field of sport studies. The overall goal of ethnographic methods is to observe, understand, represent, and gain lived experience in the culture that is the focus of the research (Angrosino, 2005; Daly, 2007; Denzin, 1997; Silk, 2005). Daly (2007) explains that “in lived experience, culture is usually hidden from view but manifested in what we wear, how we speak, and what we believe,” and it is crucial “to move physically into the cultural spaces where people engage in their everyday activities” (p. 86). Ethnography is a dynamic, emergent process that allows researchers to interact with participants in a social situation for an extended time period in order to understand their way of life; engage in active participation with the community, developing rapport with subjects; and carefully document events and happenings to reflect the specific reality of the group being studied, events, phenomena, and experiences at a site (Creswell, 2003; Daly, 2007; Denzin, 2002; Hammersly & Atkinson, 1995; Tedlock, 2005). Using this method, the overarching goal is to understand and find “recurring forms of conduct, experience, and meaning” (Denzin, 2002, p. 359). Ethnographic research is important because it gives “researchers the best opportunity to examine various phenomena as perceived by participants” (Shaffir, 1999, p. 676). A good ethnography represents lived experience, can illuminate wider social and cultural transformations if it is “true to different lived

experiences,” and “critically interrogate[s]” concepts that help define those experiences (Saukko, 2003, p. 56). Saukko (2003) advocates that ethnographers pay attention to three ideas during the research process: being truthful to different lived realities; reflecting on the self as the researcher, and the implications of that role; and acknowledging multiple voices. One aim of ethnography is to “reduce the distance between researcher and subject by more fully including the latter in the process” (Shaffir, 1999, p. 681). Essentially, ethnographic methods use collaboration to increase the role of the participant in the research process. Ethnographic work should engage both the researcher and participants in such a way that they are “coparticipants in the production of situated knowledge” (Daly, 2007, p. 190; see also Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Silk, 2005), and Silk (2005) asserts that when this happens, researchers will not only advance the development of the group being studied, but also the “political potentialities of sport studies” (p. 72). The practice of ethnography is helpful as it offers the potential to consider how the social, historical, and political contexts in which the phenomena of study is located, are mediated by particular processes, forces, and power relations continually impacting the community (Saukko, 2003).

Denzin (1997) argues that “theory, writing, and ethnography are inseparable material practices” (p. xii). Therefore, ethnography is also a textual product that relies on what Geertz (1973) famously termed ‘thick description’ (cited in Hall, 2007, p. 44) to explain what is observed in the culture of study (Creswell, 2003; Daly, 2007; Denzin, 1997; Hammersly, 1992). Ethnography requires that the researcher “describe, analyze, and interpret social expressions ... for purposes of understanding the hows, whys, and

whats of human behavior” (Shaffir, 1999, p. 676). Ethnographic data exists in the form of field notes, informal interviews, documents, and other unobtrusive measures which allow the researcher to understand how a particular cultural grouping is organized and interacts (Shaffir, 1999). Ethnographic texts produced from in-depth study “are dialogical, the site at which multiple voices come together. In them, the voices of the other, and the voices of the researcher, come alive and interact with one another” (Denzin, 1997, p. 33). Denzin (1997) believes that the ethnographer “becomes a cultural critic, a person who voices interpretations about the events recorded and observed” (p. xiii). Drawing on C. Wright Mills (1959), Denzin (1997) argues that ethnographers study moments that link private troubles to broader societal issues.

Accordingly, through an in-depth ethnographic investigation, this project has “operate[d] within a contextual PCS strategy,” as it addresses the way in which participation at Valley View is articulated to the broader social context of which it is a part (Andrews, 2008, p. 57). Ethnographies have the potential to articulate lived experience to the wider social structure in which the cultural site exists (Denzin, 1997). Following Ingham (1997), “we need to know how social structures and cultures impact social presentation of our ‘em-bodied’ selves and how our embodied selves reproduce and transform structures and cultures” (p. 176). Denzin (1997) argues that researchers “who honor lived experience ground their work on the study of flesh-and-blood individuals” (p. 33). Thus, this project attempts to understand the way in which physically active, white, upper-middle class bodies are connected with institutions giving them meaning, as “the particularity of the body cannot be understood independently of

its embeddedness in socio-ecological processes. If, as many now argue, the body is a social construct, then it cannot be understood outside of the forces that swirl around it and construct it” (Harvey, 2000, p. 16). Meaning and significance are “*inscribed*” within bodies (Shilling, 2003, p. 118, emphasis in original), and Andrews (2008) argues that to capture the socio-cultural understandings of the physically active body, qualitative methods should be engaged as this form of inquiry can “generate otherwise inaccessible interpretations and understandings of the active body/human movement” (p. 50). As mentioned, this project is supported through a strong theoretical engagement with Bourdieu’s understanding of embodied social class position. He was one of the first theorists to connect social class, corporeal representation, and physical culture (Atkinson & Wilson, 2002; Giulianotti, 2005; Harvey & Sparks, 1991; Shilling, 1991, 2003). Bourdieu advocates the study of empirical contexts through the use of naturalistic methods such as ethnography and participant observation (Bourdieu, 1985a; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Wacquant, 1989). He believes that concepts “are designed to be *put to work empirically in systematic fashion*. Such notions as habitus, field, and capital can be defined, but only within the theoretical system they constitute, not in isolation” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 96, emphasis in original). Ultimately, the goal of this research is to explain the embodied lived reality and culture of Valley View members through an in-depth understanding of their whole way of life and the meaning in their lives (Williams, 1961).

Studying the complexities of everyday lives reveals emergent contradictions, stories of resistance, and issues that are deeper than first appear on the surface

(Saukko, 2003). Therefore, “properly conceptualized ethnographic research becomes a civic, participatory, collaborative project, a project that joins the researcher with the researched in an ongoing moral dialogue” (Denzin, 2002, p.486). Appropriately, I view my research at Valley View as a collaborative, knowledge producing project which joins myself, as a researcher, and the participants in an ongoing dialogue in order offer a unique inquiry into the study of social class and physical culture. Below I will detail my ethnographic methodology including my site and sample, data collection and analysis, data quality and validity, maintaining integrity and reflexivity in the research process, and special challenges and considerations unique to this research.

Methods

Site Description

This research is ethnographic in nature and was conducted over four years at the Valley View Swim and Tennis Club, a semi-private facility located in a suburban area approximately 12 miles northwest of a major mid-Atlantic city. Valley View averages about 200 members each summer, the majority of which are families with two-parent households and children under the age of 18. The summer of 2009 saw slightly lower numbers, with a total of 167 memberships, 110 of which were families, 14 were family plus nanny, 23 were couple, and 20 were single memberships. The 43 non-family memberships were mostly older couples, or single elderly people whose children had moved away and used the pool to swim laps. In terms of cost, a 2009 summer family membership was \$670 with options to pay more for voting rights. These fees effectively allow each member to own a fraction of the club facilities. The club has three tennis

courts; one basketball court; ping pong tables; a pavilion area for picnics, grilling, and shade; and a 25-meter, six-lane pool with a depth ranging from three-and-a-half to five-and-a-half feet, and two 12-meter by 12-meter areas attached at opposite ends on opposite sides to form an “S”—one of which is a one to three foot shallow area with stairs, and the other is a 13-foot deep diving area with two one-meter diving boards. There is ample deck space, grassy areas for chairs, and a manned lifeguard office to field questions, greet and admit members, and handle emergencies. The pool itself is managed by an outside management company that is responsible for pool maintenance and lifeguard staff. The tennis courts are maintained by the members, and the Valley View executive board takes care of larger maintenance and building projects at the club.

Valley View has a swim team and a dive team, both of which compete in the County swim and dive leagues respectively, are restricted by the league to allow members only, and charge \$125 per child per team to participate for the season. Team members vary from summer to summer, but generally there are approximately 50 divers and 75 swimmers each season. Both teams are parent run with an “A” team representative and a “B” team representative, as well as other parents to facilitate the hosting of weekly swim meets. Each team has a paid head and assistant coach, and unpaid helpers who compete in the 15-18 year old age group. During June and July, both teams hold two practices during the day, one in the morning before the pool opens, and one in the late afternoon while the pool is open to other members. The club also has a tennis pro who runs a tennis day camp and private lessons on the courts. While there are competitive opportunities for children at Valley View, members who

participated in this research largely report their club membership to function primarily as a form of family leisure time and socialization, with the sport component a distant second.

Data Collection

Gaining access to Valley View was not a challenge in this research as I have been employed as the Valley View head swim coach since April 2006. In addition to coaching, I have taught private swimming lessons to approximately 75 different families over the past four summers. Due to this, I have developed an excellent rapport with many of the members at the pool as evidenced through the discussion of off-topic personal issues documented in my field notes and interview transcripts which center on weight and body image, plastic surgery, health problems, fertility issues, and adoption. However, these relationships work both ways as I have shared personal details of my life with these families over the past four years, a fact which probably increased their willingness to be open with me (Berger, 2001). Overall, the rapport I developed with the Valley View families assisted me in obtaining trust and access to participatory experiences, observations, and formal interviews, as well as informal conversations during the research process.

Given my position, I have approximately 2800 hours of lived experience with this community, documented through a series of field notes. To corroborate the data documented in my field notes, make my interpretations more credible, and accentuate my understanding of the lives of Valley View families, I conducted interviews with mothers and children who frequent the pool. My goal in the interviewing process was

to achieve dialogue through open conversations with participants (Stroh, 2000b). Interviews focused on 20 mothers in families fitting the following characteristics: married parents of more than one child; one child in the family must be between six and 10 years old; and this child must actively participate in the swim team, dive team, or private swim lessons during the summer. These criteria were developed in an effort to obtain perspectives from Valley View families who frequent the pool often, and have children young enough that they still rely on parental control and their parents are still actively involved in their lives, but are also old enough to have ideas, opinions, interests, and activities of their own (Lareau, 2003).

To begin the interviewing process, I made a list of families fitting these characteristics and only came up with about 30 of the 124 member families. As soon as the pool opened for the summer 2009 season on Memorial Day Weekend, I began seeing returning members and started to ask mothers to participate in interviews over the course of the summer. All 20 women who were asked said yes, and were helpful in the recruitment of subsequent interviews. Each of the 20 women signed an Institutional Review Board approved consent form, and participated in a recorded, in-depth, semi-structured interview (see appendix D for interview questions). Interviews lasted anywhere between 45 and 105 minutes, and took place at each woman's home at an agreed upon time, ranging anytime during the day from seven o'clock in the morning to eight-thirty in the evening. It was crucial that I understood the parental perspective in order to more accurately discover how Valley View plays an integral role in members daily and family lives. In addition to interviews with the Valley View mothers, I also

engaged in 15 recorded (all but one), informal, semi-structured, 10 to 30 minute interviews with their six to 10 year old children. The goal in these interviews was to assess the children's perspective, feelings, and the meaning they associate with their family membership at Valley View (see appendix D for interview questions). These 15 children came from 11 families, and included three sets of siblings fitting the same age criteria. Initially I had wanted to interview children from all 20 families, however schedules did not allow, and I felt that it was more important to gain the mothers' perspective on their Valley View experience and therefore I made their interviews a priority over their children's. Overall, the interviews helped me to learn the motivations for spending the summer at the pool, participating in the swim team and other pool-oriented activities, and the way in which parents (namely mothers) invoke their social class privilege on behalf of their children.

Sample Demographic Characteristics

As discussed, understanding social class privilege was essential to this project, and as such, it was imperative to establish a demographic profile of the participating families. The town where Valley View is located is home to many government employees, lawyers, and professional business persons, and reports a median household income of \$157,254 per year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008). Gilbert's (2008) Model of Class Structure in the United States indicates that the current middle class grouping comprises approximately 30% of the total population and earns a household income of, on average, \$70,000 per year through skilled occupations, mainly consisting of lower managers, semi-professionals, craftsmen, salesmen, and foremen.

This same model explains the upper-middle class grouping as about 14% of Americans in families making \$150,000 per year, on average, through professions requiring university education such as upper-level managers, professionals, and medium sized business owners. Participants in this research were asked complete anonymous demographic surveys in which they designated, among other characteristics, annual household income (see appendix C for survey and complete results). They had a choice of six options derived from the 2007 Current Population Survey which developed income quintiles for the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Of the 20 women surveyed, one selected her annual household income to be between \$100,000 and \$135,000; three checked their between \$135,000 and \$177,000; and the remaining 16 noted their income to be more than \$177,000 annually. These results place all participants in the top 20% of families in the U.S. and 16, or 80% of families, in the top 5% of all American households.

In addition to their socio-economic standing, the Valley View mothers also volunteered demographic information related to their ethnicity, occupation, age, children, and level of education. Sixteen of the 20 women identified as White, while the remaining four, 20%, selected Asian. This distribution, purely based on my own observation, appears to be a fairly accurate representation of families at the pool, and if anything, participants in this project potentially represent a higher non-White percentage than found at Valley View. In terms of occupation, 35% (seven) of mothers stay home full-time, while the remaining two-thirds (65%) work part-time as professionals in fields such as law, accounting, and administration. The average age of

participants was 40 years old, and 11 families had only two children, eight families had three children, and one family had four children. Lastly, this was a highly educated group of women with 75% of them possessing a post-graduate degree and 100% earning a college degree. Similarly, they reported 85% of their husbands had a post-graduate degree and 100% of them held a college degree. Accordingly, based on Gilbert's (2008) Model of Class Structure, U.S. Census Data, and participant information, for the purposes of this project, Valley View's membership base was classified as upper-middle class, and the terms upper-middle class, upper-income, and dominant class are used interchangeably when referring to Valley View.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

All field notes had been taken by August 31, 2009, and all 35 interviews were completed between May 26, 2009 and September 2, 2009. In the beginning of the summer, immediately following each interview, I would begin the transcription process, but as the summer wore on, the K-12 schools went on summer break so the pool opened for longer during the day, the swim season got more hectic, and sometimes I conducted three interviews in one week, so I inevitably ended up getting behind. I found myself continuing the transcription process throughout September as each adult interview took anywhere between four and ten hours to transcribe, and each child interview between 30 and 90 minutes. In addition, I then reviewed the recordings and transcriptions for accuracy. This process was incredibly labor intensive, however through it, I was able to gain a great deal of knowledge about what was discussed, "reexperience the interview at a slow pace" (Daly, 2007, p. 217), and continually

consider what the mothers and children were saying and how it related to this project. Additionally, by doing my own transcription, I was also able to reflect upon and change some elements of my interview style in subsequent interviews, and further, gain a contextual understanding of pauses, interruptions, jokes and/or sarcasm, and muffled voices. All totaled, between interview transcripts, field notes, and supporting documents, I ended up with approximately 700 single-spaced pages of computerized data.

Once transcribed, all computerized data collected at Valley View was uploaded into Atlas.ti, a qualitative coding software program designed to assist with the interpretation and analysis processes. I recognize that a tension exists in PCS regarding the value of using qualitative software to assist with data, however I strongly believe in the advantages it offers. Qualitative computer software can be an excellent tool when it comes to transforming data, as it benefits “the researcher in terms of speed, consistency, rigor, and access to analytic methods not available by hand” (for instance recoding and editing) (Weitzman, 1999, p. 1241; see also Wolcott, 1994). Further, “these programs represent a quantum leap forward from the old scissors-and-paper approach: they're more systematic, more thorough, less likely to miss things, more flexible, and much, much faster” (Weitzman, 1999, p. 1247-1248). Using qualitative software for data analysis can be worrisome to researchers who fear they will become distanced from their data, but I found, as Weitzman (1999) insists, that Atlas.ti was able to “help [me] get even closer to the data than [I could] with paper transcripts” (p.1259) since all files were on the screen in an instant, the full context was available to me, and

there were multiple data-viewing options. While computers certainly allow for a different relationship with the data than do manual approaches, according to Stroh (2000a), this starts with the decision to transcribe interviews and/or take field notes using a computer, which I had been doing since the beginning of my field work. It is important to recognize that computers do not actually do the work of analyzing the data, instead the control remains in the hands of the researcher who still must understand the methodological implications and considerations inherent in all research (Stroh, 2000a; Weitzman, 1999). Stroh (2000a) cautions that though qualitative data can be “chaotic,” it is not the job “of the qualitative analyst to impose order on this chaos; rather to find a system of data management which can work with rather than against this characteristic” (p. 228). For me, Atlas.ti was the appropriate management tool to assist me in working with my 700 pages of field notes and interview transcripts. Atlas.ti was extremely useful in structuring this volume of data as I could see and explore all of my documents at the same time; continuously play with various groupings of different ideas; retrieve important quotes and phrases quickly; search through all text with more ease; and constantly relate between the data itself, my theoretical understanding, and relevant literature. Overall, Atlas.ti provides a great deal of flexibility (Stroh, 2000a; Weitzman, 1999).

Atlas.ti was able to help me identify and develop themes and concepts through reflection and analysis of my data (Emerson et al., 1997). Coding through computer software can assist researchers in breaking their data down into “manageable chunks” which can be sorted and categorized in order for researchers to build a theoretical

framework and interpret the data (Stroh, 2000b, p. 210; see also LaRossa, 2005a). This method relies upon language as the connections between words and theories, and the empirical and conceptual, and drives the development of central themes, concepts, and theories created from the data (LaRossa, 2005a). Using qualitative coding to “transform data” is helpful because it can illustrate focused, research-based inquiry that is relevant, clear, and credible (Wolcott, 1994, p. 24). Qualitative research practices are “fundamentally interpretive” (Creswell, 2003, p. 182), requiring the researcher to continually be engaging in a bi-directional process of interpretation and analysis of data (Creswell, 2003; Daly, 2007; Johnson, Chambers, Raghuram, & Ticknell, 2004; Van den Hoonard, 1997; Wolcott, 1994). This cyclical process was greatly enhanced through the use of Atlas.ti, as I was able to organize and identify phenomena in my data, link relevant findings to theoretical understandings, and develop salient themes from the empirical texts collected in the field.

Coding is a time-consuming step in the research process and occurs in three phases: open, axial, and selective (Creswell, 2003; Daly, 2007; LaRossa, 2005a; Van den Hoonard, 1997). I used these three phases to organize and help me think “theoretically about textual materials” (including interview transcripts and field notes), rather than specifically to build grounded theory as coding procedures are often used to develop (LaRossa, 2005a, p. 838; see also Creswell, 2003; Daly, 2007). Open coding involves the identification, categorization, and organization of key concepts by breaking down the data (Creswell, 2007; Daly, 2007). Van den Hoonard (1997) explains that it is initially helpful to develop open codes that come directly from the empirical data gained from

the participants' perspectives. With each transcript that was analyzed, I developed more categories, and often times I went back to texts which had already been coded to incorporate these additional concepts. Frequent re-coding and/or re-visiting all of my field notes and interview transcripts helped me to be immersed in my research materials and get an excellent sense of the content I had collected. Overall, I developed just under 100 open codes.

Once I finished the open coding process, I began axial coding, a step designed to build the data back up by making connections and interrelations between and among categories, with the goal being "to articulate how component parts contribute to the meaningful coherence of the category" (Daly, 2007, p. 235). This phase "brings to bear all known empirical instances to which the concept refers," and helps to arrange quotes, expressions, and ideas that belong together (Van den Hoonaard, 1997, p. 39). To perform this step, I exported each separate code from Atlas.ti, with all of the associated quotations that accompanied it, to a word document. I reviewed each code document with the goal of grouping similar code documents together to form "mini-themes." I developed multiple "mini-themes" through my examination of the codes, and highlighted the most salient excerpts that I was sure needed to be included in my dissertation document.

Finally, I moved on to what I believe is a modified version of selective coding, a step typically used to identify a central theme or an overarching, linking concept that explains phenomena at the research site. Through the selective coding process, a story is generated that details the experience of the culture at the focus of the research

(Creswell, 2003; Daly, 2007). I use the term “modified” to describe how I engaged in selective coding because I did not expressly try to build theory or develop one overarching theme through this coding process. Rather, because this research was already structured based on Bourdieu’s theoretical understanding of social class, I was attempting to gain lived experience and understand the fabric of Valley View family lives, and thus, I used the selective coding process as a way to identify themes in the data. Themes can come from the data, theories, and literature (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Through selective coding I was able to develop four major themes from the empirical coded data which formed the central idea in each of my four empirically-based chapters.

Data Quality

With the development of these themes present at Valley View, however, there were some important challenges to the identification of a central story that is representative of participants’ experience (Daly, 2007). In qualitative research there is no single correct interpretation, and there will always be differing, and equally valid, inferences drawn from any research site, and thus the goal is not to find an absolute truth, rather it is to understand the reality of the culture at hand (Flaherty, 2002; Maxwell, 2002). Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) advocate employing the process of crystallization by acknowledging that there is no one reality and there can be “deepened, complex, and thoroughly partial understandings” of any research site as there is more than one way to approach inquiry (p. 963). Qualitative validity means representing the reality of the culture that we are studying accurately and to the best of

our ability, and therefore investigation should focus on the “factual accuracy” of the culture, participants, and site (Maxwell, 2002, p. 45; see also Daly, 2007). Daly (2007) argues that validity is demonstrated when research “does a good job of the following: portraying experience that it set out to describe or explain, using data to support the interpretative assertions, and providing a full and feasible account of the phenomenon being explored” (p. 254). Further, validity is achieved when the researcher exercises both integrity and credibility through consistency in the research methodology.

It is necessary, however, to take multiple steps to ensure validity in the qualitative research process, and these can include triangulation, saturation, member checks, thick description, reflexivity, presenting counter information, peer debriefing, collaboration with participants, and external auditing (Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Miller, 2000). To achieve validity in this research, I engaged in six of these nine methods. First, I approached my inquiry through triangulation as I used multiple-methods including interviews, observations, and participant observations to understand the culture of Valley View (Creswell, 2003; Daly, 2007). Second, I achieved saturation at Valley View through a prolonged engagement and a relationship with the members of the pool (Creswell, 2003). Upon the conclusion of my research, I had spent approximately 2800 hours at Valley View working closely with the participants, getting to know them well, and establishing rapport with them. Creswell and Miller (2000) argue that spending a long time in the field “solidifies evidence because researchers can check out the data and their hunches and compare interview data with observational data” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 128). Accordingly, I also conducted 35 interviews with mothers and

children at the pool to corroborate my interpretations and increase my understanding of the lives of Valley View families. “Credible data” results from “collaboration with participants,” an additional way to establish validity (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 128). Further, I have continued my involvement with Valley View members even though I am no longer collecting data. These continued relationships can increase the quality of the findings as well. Next, I used member-checking to “determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings” (Creswell, 2003, p. 196), a process involving returning to participants to “confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). To practically conduct member checks, I emailed all 20 mothers an 11-page, single-spaced document that contained one excerpt from each of the four empirical chapters in this dissertation. The document did not include any sociological theorizing, rather it was based strictly on the first drafts of the major themes in each chapter which were developed through the passages identified in the coding process. I asked all participants to assess whether they found the excerpts to be “consistent” with their “Valley View experience and our interviews.” Six of the 20 mothers responded that they did in fact find what I had written to correspond to their summer experience at the pool. Of the remaining 14, one emailed me and said she would get to read the document in the future (though never did), but was very busy at the moment, and the other 13 did not respond to me at all. While there was only a 30% response rate, all comments indicated that the “overall account [was] realistic and accurate” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). Further, I engaged in peer-debriefing with “Qualis,” a qualitative workshop group which met twice a month to tackle

methodological issues in our ongoing, different, yet related, projects. For me, these peer-review meetings helped me to continually develop my ideas, have a forum to critically discuss my research, and enhance my account of Valley View, ensuring that it “will resonate with people other than the researcher” (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). And finally, I did my best to be reflexive throughout the research process and I worked hard to avoid any biased thinking or behavior that would threaten the validity of my research data, interpretation, analysis, or writing (Becker, 1967; Daly, 2007).

Reflexivity

Ethnographers study culture through naturalistic methods, and their intention regarding making sense of the social world demands that they “acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences” (Creswell, 2003, p. 8-9; see also Daly, 2007). Bourdieu believes very strongly in reflexivity, and his ideas are aimed “at increasing the scope and solidity of social scientific knowledge” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 37). I believe that reflexivity is important to all research, and considered it particularly vital to this project due to the nature of my relationships with Valley View members. Daly (2007) advocates studying a phenomenon that has some personal meaning or significance because it can help to continue engagement, involvement with the group, and the effort to finish the research. Admittedly, I certainly studied a culture that I was deeply involved with, and while this kept me both interested and excited, it also put me in scenarios that were difficult to negotiate.

Reflexivity is the process of critically reflecting on the role of the self as the researcher (Daly, 2007), and acknowledging beliefs, biases, and positions up front so that the researcher can “reflect on the social, cultural, and historical forces that shape their interpretation” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). Bourdieu reflects on three ways in which bias can “blur the sociological gaze”:

The first is the one singled out by other advocates of reflexivity: the social origins and coordinates (class, gender, ethnicity, etc.) of the individual researcher. This is the most obvious bias and thus the more readily controlled one by means of mutual and self-criticism. The second bias is much less often discerned and pondered: it is that linked to the position that the analyst occupies, not in the broader social structure, but in the microcosm of the *academic* field, that is, in the objective space of possible intellectual positions offered to him or her at a given moment, and beyond, in the field of power ... But it is the third bias that is most original to Bourdieu’s understanding of reflexivity. The *intellectual bias* which entices us to construe the world as a *spectacle*, as a set of significations to be interpreted rather than as concrete problems to be solved practically, is more profound and more distorting than those rooted in the social origins or location of the analyst in the academic field, because it can lead us to miss entirely the *differentia specifica* of the logic of practice. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 39, emphasis in original)

For Bourdieu, reflexivity “guide[s] the practical carrying out of social inquiry” as he speaks to the importance of disclosing researcher identity and how the researcher’s position as an academic impacts research in the social field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 40). Daly (2007) reminds us that as researchers we are always dual citizens of both the cultures we study and the academic community, an important consideration.

Reflexivity in ethnographic work relies on identity management and the researcher’s understanding that all information is always mediated through the self (Daly, 2007). Any representation is only partial, and based on the “limitations of the researcher’s perspective” (Boyd, 2008, p. 216; see also Denzin, 1997). Therefore,

drawing on Bourdieu, it was important for me to recognize that in any research situation, the researcher brings three versions of the self: the researcher self, the brought self, and the situationally created self. As these identities related to my research at Valley View, I must acknowledge that as a researcher I had read literature and theory to help me understand some of the processes, experiences, and phenomena I witnessed, observed, and been a part of at the pool. Also, my researcher self was focused on the successful completion of this project, and thus had separate personal goals impacting the process. My brought self is a white, married, middle class, female, who is former division I swimmer and coach. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) argue that it is important to take into consideration different perspectives of social realities that are based on our own “gender, sensibilities, biographies, spiritual and emotional longings” as they shape the research process (p. 963; see also Daly, 2007). Through this project I realized that I “can only understand the Other through reflecting on its similarity to and difference from, the Self” (Saukko, 2003, p. 56). Accordingly, it is important to disclose that through my brought self I recognize the cyclical operation of capital in my own life, and the way in which it contributed to the development of my physical capital in swimming, a set of skills that have garnered me many important and life-changing opportunities. My brought self also understands the families and relationships at the pool from personal experience, knows what it feels like to be on a swim team, can see great benefits to membership in the Valley View community, and hopes one day to offer a summer swimming experience to her own children. Thirdly, my situationally created self may be the hardest to reconcile as I balanced performing

my job as the swim coach and swim lesson instructor, while simultaneously conducting research. I empathized and sympathized with members, got to know parents and children, coached the team with a vested interest in their individual development and success as well as our record and group performance, and gave swim lessons and coached knowing that I was being paid for how well I performed my job. As an example of my multiple, inseparable selves at the pool, the following is a portion of the text of the email Tracy wrote me after our interview:

I enjoyed our interview today - it made me think about all the reasons why I love Valley View and how important it is to our family's summer. So thank you for bringing out all those good feelings and reinforcing our decision to spend so much time at the pool.

While I very much appreciated that Tracy enjoyed our interview and took the time to write me an email, I could not help but consider my role as both coach and researcher and the implications of this duality. Tracy insinuated that I helped to “reinforce” her familial membership, thus indicating that her family believes that I am a constitutive element of the Valley View Swim and Tennis Club. Assuming my analysis and interpretation discussed in this dissertation are credible, then it is clear through Tracy’s sentiments that my role at the pool helps to reproduce the white, upper-middle class social privilege I have detailed in the previous chapters. Accordingly, to be reflexive, I needed to understand my role and the presence of these three different, inseparable selves during the research process (Creswell, 2003).

Saukko (2003) explains that the “counterpart to being true to Other realities in new ethnography is to be critically aware of the way in which one’s Self and its commitments shape the research” (Saukko, 2003, p. 62). Through this project I was

cognizant of my previous experiences, relationships to participants, and insider/outsider status within the community as the researcher is never just a neutral observer (Denzin, 1997; Hammersly & Atkinson, 1995). My identity at Valley View was and continues to be unique as I am neither a true insider nor true outsider. On the one hand, I feel like I am always an insider at the club because the participants know me and I know them, their culture and context, and have insider relationships in the community. This status gave me much more access to situations that I normally would not be privy to, something Fine (1987) believes is necessary for this type of research to be good. Yet the field worker is always an outsider, even when they are “an attached or instrumental member” in the community (Shaffir, 1999, p. 683), and/or conducting unobtrusive observation (Angrosino, 2005). I am an employee who works for the members of the pool. I might have authority with the children, swimming knowledge over the parents, and be treated as an important person at Valley View, but any way I look at it, I am not a member, rather, I am employed by the pool and its members which makes me an outsider.

Due to my uniquely familiar position, I worked to make sure that I represented my research “in a way that challenges the reader’s taken-for-granted understandings” (Foley, 1992, p. 37). Through my position as a coach, teacher, paid employee, and friend, my identity at the pool was conflated. Physical characteristics and researcher identities impact upon the research process and complicate issues of who reveals what to whom and why (May & Patillo-McCoy, 2000; Stanley & Slattery, 2003). Further, Shaffir (1999) explains that the researcher needs to remember that there may be a

degree of role-playing and/or acting involved in the investigative process as self-presentation is important. I experienced this when members' comments to me intimated a particular set of values and level of comfort in our relationship. I had to manage these conversations carefully as the way I chose to deal with these issues had an impact on my research as a whole. For instance, in our interviews many mothers ended their answers to my questions with the phrase, "you know?" At first I did not understand the implications of this, however as I transcribed our interviews, I realized that voicing my agreement with their comment indicated approval, and tended to make them continue speaking. Concerned with the data quality, I in turn continued to nod, or reply yes when they asked, "you know?" Further, during our interviews I found myself telling the women things about my life that made them feel more comfortable with their own decisions, and thus more likely to elaborate on their feelings. As an example, I had voluntary conversations with many of the women about their choice to either stay home or go back to work after having children, during which I often brought up my own tensions about my pursuit of higher education and hopefully a full-time career, versus my own mother's choice to be a stay-at-home mom. Overall, managing my own identity, and the way in which it operates as a constitutive element of Valley View, proved to be an interesting challenge.

Challenges and Considerations

I found both the ethnographic process and product to be extremely ethically challenging when it came to acquiring and representing information from the mothers. While all participants signed a consent form approved by the IRB, I still had to negotiate

the way I reconciled the information gained from participants, and how and if to present it. For example, given how well many of the members at the pool know me, I had to be very careful not to take advantage of situations. As discussed above regarding building rapport, the women told me personal details about their lives and asked or intimated that they were not included in the research even though they were recorded in our interviews. I struggled a great deal with how much of this content to use throughout this dissertation document as I did not want to betray anyone's trust, but at the same time, wanted to tell what I knew to be an accurate story of the Valley View families. In the end, I did not include anything more than the broad generalizations mentioned in the data collection section. Additionally, I found it difficult to determine how to disclose my goals as an observer and participant observer to members on a daily basis. When conducting research at the women's homes, it was quite obvious that I was collecting data and recording the details of our discussions. Yet at the pool, this was not all that clear, and I got the sense that the mothers felt our interactions were finite in the two hours at their house, rather than continuous and emergent at Valley View. I was also collecting field notes regarding all Valley View members, not just the ones whom I interviewed. Further, many of the notes I took at the pool were prompted by conversations members would have with me as 'coach' or 'swimming expert,' and on the surface they were not directly related to the context of my research, yet collectively they were pieces of information I wanted to include because they contributed to a larger story. I found these challenges difficult to reconcile.

Fine (1993) cautions that if research participants are fully aware of the aims of the project, responses may be “skewed,” and further, particularly in ethnographic research, often researchers do not know the full extent of their research plans until they finish collecting data (p. 274). Thus, it often behooves researchers to take on a “shallow cover,” informing participants of just what they need to know when conducting investigations into communities and subcultures (Fine, 1987, 1993). Fine (1993) argues that there is a thin line between how much is too much to reveal, noting that all professions “develop a body of conceits that they wish to hide from those outside the boundaries of their domain; so it is with ethnographers” (p. 289), and therefore sometimes researchers should be purposefully vague and ambiguous for the sake of the project. Upon considering my dual role at Valley View, I realized that there were multiple instances where I invoked a shallow cover. I believe this identity was instrumental in the discovery and production of meaningful results, but at the same time, I found it challenging as I remained ethically and morally concerned with the way I presented myself and represented the Valley View members. My biggest fear throughout this project was that I would not portray the Valley View families in a way that they approved of, and I remain apprehensive about this even today. I owe the families who took part in this research so much gratitude—from their willingness to participate in this project to the way they have made me a part of their Valley View family over the past four years. Collectively, I have found the families at the pool to be warm, welcoming, and generous, and I would never want to cause any harm to them.

An additional challenge in this research was more of a practical one involving working with children. Daly (2007) cautions that when interviewing children “it is important they be reflexive when considering the dynamics of power that exist between an adult interviewer and a younger child” (p. 204). In my situation it was particularly complex because the children see me not only as an adult, but also their coach or swim lesson teacher, and in their eyes, I exert an added dimension of power over them. I had hoped that my familiarity with the kids would foster a relaxed setting so that they could provide interesting information, but I found that even in situations where they were not nervous about being recorded, they felt that there were “wrong” and “right” answers which made them tentative and quiet. This was interesting because I would see these children at the pool everyday, am very familiar with them, and they are on a first name basis with me. Once they found out I was going to be interviewing some of them, the news spread like wild fire, and many would persistently ask me if it was going to be that day that we had our interview. Based on this reaction, I expected volumes of information and very verbose discussions, but it turned out to be the opposite in many conversations. However, that is not to say I was not able to collect good data from the child interviews because I believe I did, rather I had just expected that my prior relationship may have given me more information from them.

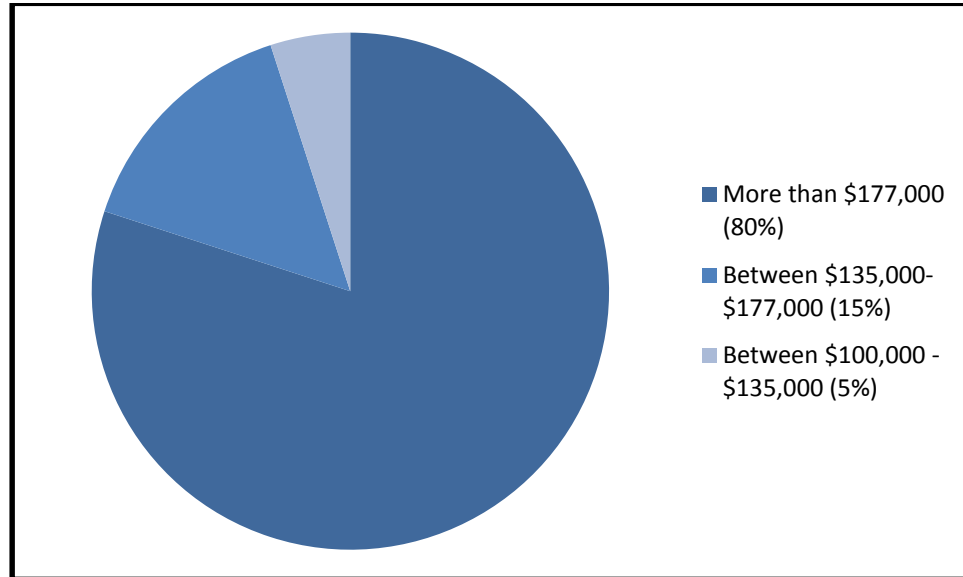
Limitations

While I consider this research to be credible and important, it does have its limitations. First, as discussed at length above, I was, and still remain, an influential member of the Valley View community. I serve as a constitutive element of the pool

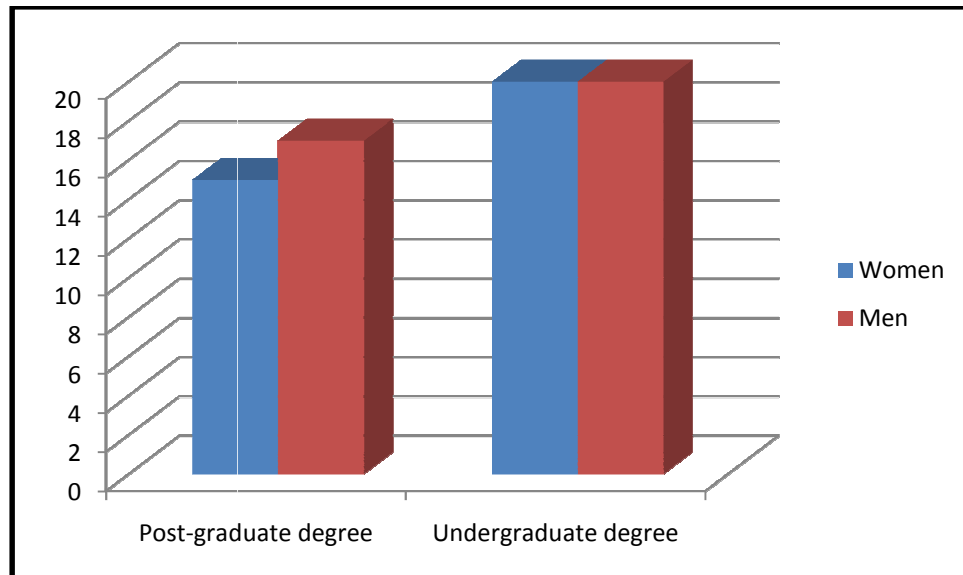
culture and context, and my actions and behavior contribute to the reproduction of privilege which this dissertation details. I firmly believe that my position at Valley View granted me access to otherwise inaccessible scenarios, yet at the same time, it also structured my research in a particular way, and a researcher less familiar with the site or playing a different, less participatory role, may have chosen to represent the culture of Valley View differently. And secondly, this research is limited by the examination of only one empirical site. While I had a great deal of ethnographic experience at Valley View, it would have been interesting to conduct analogous research at a swim club that catered to a different demographic, whether that be race, class, or even gender, as it could have provided more and different interesting conclusions. Lastly, this project was limited by my decision to interview mothers and children, but not fathers. For a full familial account of the lived Valley View experience, fathers should be included. I hope to be able to both do similar research at a different empirical site and include fathers in future projects.

Overall, it is my sincere hope that I represented the generous families who participated in this research with integrity and respect. I am indebted to them not only for their participation in this project, but also for the way they have welcomed me into their lives every summer for the past four years.

Appendix C: Demographic Profile of Valley View Families

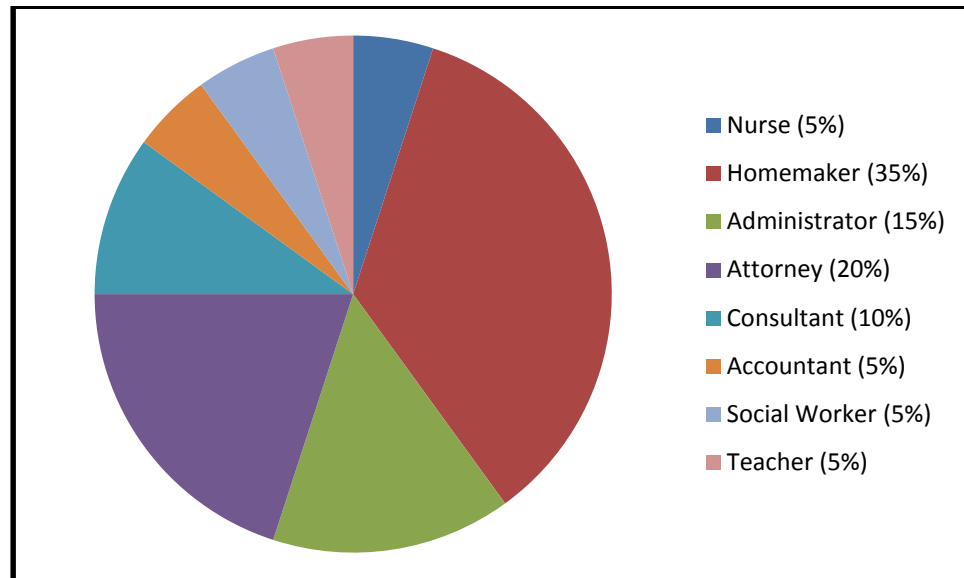


According to the women's designation of their annual household income, 16 of the 20 families earn more than \$177,000 annually. Three families bring in between \$135,000-\$177,000, and one family makes between \$100,000-\$135,000 per year.

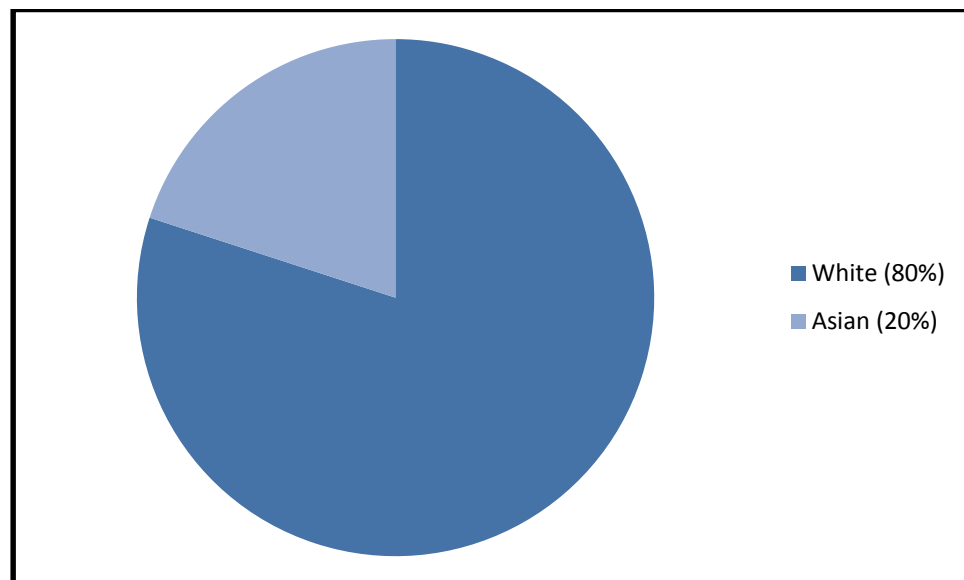


The Valley View mothers all completed an undergraduate degree, and 15 of 20 of them obtained a post-graduate degree. Likewise, all of their husbands completed an undergraduate degree, and 17 of the 20 of them earned a post-graduate degree.

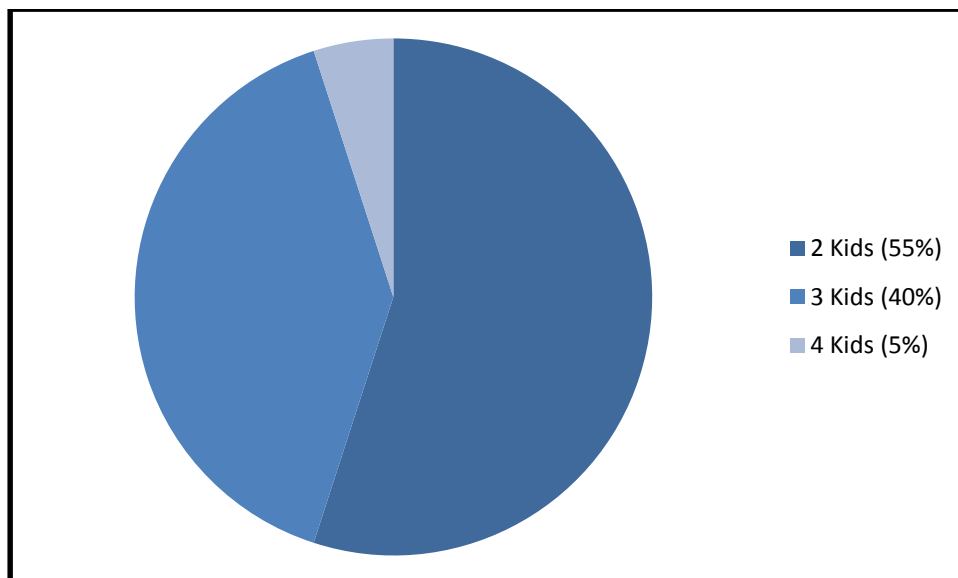
The average age of the mothers in this research was 40, with their ages ranging between 30 and 47 at the time they were interviewed.



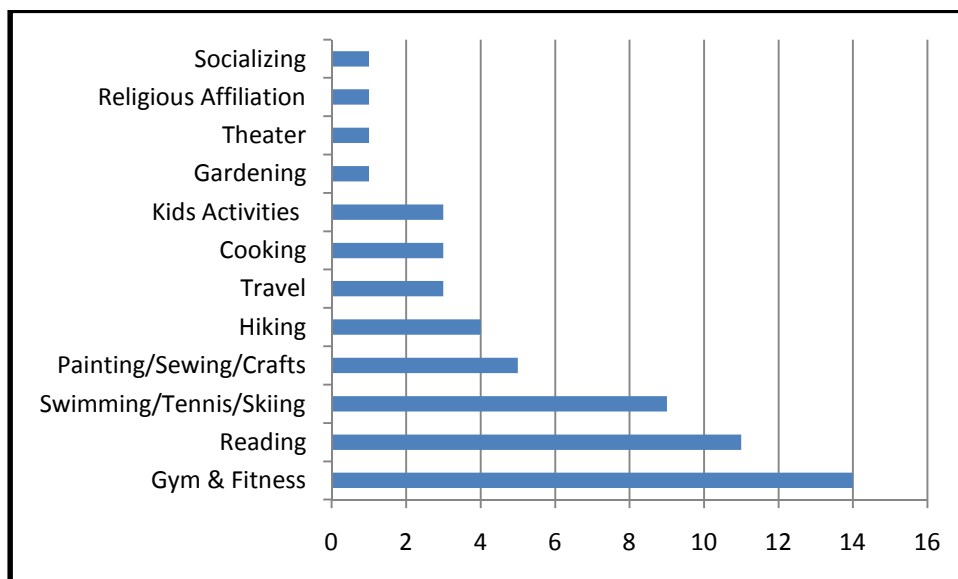
The women occupy the professions listed above. Seven women noted themselves as homemakers, while the other 13 are employed part-time in professional positions. None of the women work full-time, however the part-time work hours range from under 10 up to 40 hours per week.



Of the women interviewed, 16 indicated that they are white, and 4 indicated they are Asian. While not measured in the space of this project, this non-white percentage appears to be higher than the overall distribution of non-white families at the pool.



Of the families surveyed in this research, one has four children, eight have three children, and 11 have only two children.



The women listed activities and hobbies they take part in during their leisure time.

Demographic Survey Completed by Mothers

Ethnicity: _____ White Age: _____
_____ Black/African American
_____ American Indian/Alaska Native
_____ Asian
_____ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
_____ Other

Number of Children _____ Ages _____

Highest Level of Education Attained: _____ High School
_____ Some College
_____ College Degree
_____ Post-Graduate Degree

Annual Household Income: _____ less than \$39,100
_____ between \$39,100 – \$62,000
_____ between \$62,000 – \$100,000
_____ between \$100,000 – \$135,000
_____ between \$135,000 – \$177,000
_____ more than \$177,000

Occupation _____ (circle one) Part-time or Full-time

Previous Occupation _____ (circle one) Part-time or Full-time

Leisure / Recreation / Hobbies / Clubs _____

Spouse Highest Level of Education Attained: _____ High School
_____ Some College
_____ College Degree
_____ Post-Graduate Degree

Spouse's occupation _____

Spouse's leisure / recreation / hobbies _____

Appendix D: Interview Protocols

Interview Questions for Valley View Mothers

1. Tell me about your decision to join Valley View Swim & Tennis club.
 - a. Why did you join?
 - i. Did you belong to a club like this as a child?
 1. What is your swimming background?
 2. Have your swimming experiences influenced your decision to join Valley View?
 - ii. Did your husband belong to a club like this as a child?
 1. What is his swimming background?
 - b. Have you ever considered joining a different pool?
 - i. Why belong to a swim & tennis club? Why not any of the other country clubs or other recreational clubs in the area?
 - ii. Have you ever considered leaving Valley View? Why?
 - iii. Why is Valley View a priority in your life?
 - c. Does your family have any other types of memberships that constitute a family (recreational) experience in a way similar to Valley View?
 - i. Health/fitness (gym)
 - ii. Social organization
 - iii. Volunteer organization
 - iv. Religious organization
2. Tell me about what Valley View means to you.
 - a. How often do you come to the pool?/How often does your whole family go to the pool together?
 - b. What is your main motivation for coming to the pool?
 - c. How do you know other pool members?/How does the pool fit into your social life?
 - d. Has there been anything you have been really pleased with? Annoyed with?
 - e. Do your kids take part in any program offerings at Valley View during the summer? (If so, what)
 - f. How would you describe the atmosphere at the pool?
 - g. What do you spend your time primarily doing when you are at the pool?
3. How does Valley View shape your family life?
 - a. How did your children learn to swim?
 - b. (IF) How does swim team fit into your schedule?
 - c. Do you believe that your child likes the pool/swim team, etc.?
 - d. What is it about the pool that allows it to become such a prominent feature of your life?

- e. How often does your whole family visit the pool together?
- 4. Tell me about a “day in the life” schedule of your average summer day.
 - a. Children’s activities – what activities and why?
 - b. Chores/errands
 - c. What is your leisure time like?
 - d. Do you enjoy this schedule? (Being a working/stay-at-home mom?)
 - e. Who has more input in the overall family schedule – you or your husband?
- 5. How do your child’s activities shape family time and your family life?
 - a. How do your children’s [sport] activities, specifically swimming, play a part in your daily life?
 - b. Camps? Sports? Extra-curricular activities?
 - c. How do you schedule their activities?
 - i. How much input do they have in what they do?
 - ii. Do the kids do activities because of friends?
 - d. What are the most popular activities/sports in the area?
- 6. How do you believe swimming/sports in general enhance your children’s lives?
 - a. Is it important that they participate in these activities?
 - b. How will swimming benefit them in the future?
 - c. How does the pool encourage health benefits/healthy lifestyle?
 - i. What are the healthy benefits of swimming?
 - ii. What does “health” mean to you?
 - iii. Are your kids aware of the “health benefits” of swimming/the pool?
- 7. Tell me about your goals for your children?
 - a. How do you help facilitate these?
 - b. What is your biggest fear for your children?

Interview Questions for Children

1. Tell me why (if) you like belonging to Valley View.
 - a. Do you have lots of friends at the pool?
 - b. Are your friends different in the summer than during the school year?
2. What do you like about the pool?
3. Tell me about coming to the pool with your family.
 - a. Do you like being here with your family? Why/why not?
 - b. Do you spend a lot of time playing with your family members at the pool?
 - c. Do you all come together? Do you like coming with your mom or your dad?
4. How do you feel about being at the pool? About swimming?
 - a. Where does it rank within your other activities?
 - b. What is your favorite sport/activity? Why?
 - c. What do you do at the pool?
 - d. Do you feel like you have a sense of freedom when you are at the pool?
5. Do you feel safe at the pool?
6. How much does it mean to you to be a good swimmer? Why is that?
7. What do you think are the healthy benefits of swimming?
 - a. Does swimming make you healthy?
 - b. What is a healthy person?
8. Why is Valley View important to you?
9. When you think of Valley View, what words come into your mind?
10. What is the best thing about Valley View?

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