

“RECONNECTING WITH MY ROOTS”: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF
PREVIOUSLY LAUNCHED ADULTS

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by

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2008

*This thesis is dedicated to all the strong women in my life
of past and present
who have taught and encouraged me to persevere and
stop at nothing to achieve my dreams.*

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ABSTRACT

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According to the U.S. Census, the number of adult children moving back in with their parents is growing. Research shows attributable factors that include student loan debt, dismal job opportunities, economic downturn, low salaries for entry-level jobs and high housing costs. These adult children are commonly called “previously launched adults”, and this study focused on “previously launched adults” who are college graduates. Studies show that adult children returning to the home of their parents affects the happiness of the parents, but to my knowledge there is no research on how the

children themselves feel about the move. My study explored experiences of “previously launched adults.” Utilizing qualitative in-depth interviews with 16 (8 male and 8 female) individuals, I studied what the emotions, experiences and feelings were of individuals moving back in with a parent. I also explored the self-esteem, self-appraisal, and identity of those who did so. I inquired whether those who moved back in with their parents felt stigmatized by their peers. I examined how they negotiated these effects and what these experiences meant to them.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Layla is a 24 year-old graduate from a top tier university with a degree in Finance. She graduated with honors and got a job at a prestigious insurance company in her hometown where she works as a financial advisor and gives clients advice on managing millions of dollars. She lived with her parents after she moved back home, moved out on her own, and is now living with her parents again. Like Layla, more college graduates are moving back in with their parents after graduation. Attributable factors include student loan debt, dismal job opportunities, economic downturn, low salaries for entry level jobs and high housing costs (Furman 2005). During periods in the family life cycle known as the “launching” and “empty nest periods”, adult children were once expected to move out on their own, get married, and start a family (Clemens and Axelson 1985). Common terms for the adult children include “previously launched adult” and “incompletely launched adult” (Schnaiberg and Goldenberg 1989). Surveys from the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau show that 25 percent of Americans between the ages of 18 and 34 are living with their parents. It appears that the life transition has been redefined, and the number of adult children who are moving back in with their parents, or the “boomerang generation”, is growing (Mitchell 1998).

While there have been some studies on adult children returning to the home of their parents and how this affects the happiness of the parents, there has been no research on the effects that this move has on the children themselves. My study explores experiences of “previously launched adults.” This study is sociologically significant for several reasons. If these adults are forced to move back in with their parents it may have a detrimental effect on their identities, self-esteem, and self-appraisal. Moving back in with parents could make adult children feel like they are part of a stigmatized group or alienated from their peers who were not forced to move back in with parents. Turner and Tajfel (1979) describe a component of social identity theory that describes a phenomenon in which we identify and associate ourselves with certain groups, which serve to bolster our self-esteem. If adult children who move back in with their parents are now part of a stigmatized group, their self-esteem and identity could suffer as a result. Goffman (1963) describes acts in which individuals exercise discrimination against those thought to have a stigmatized identity. Those with the “spoiled identity” have different ways of responding to this discrimination, such as correcting the basis of the failure or condition. If a person is placed by society into a stigmatized group, this person will begin to associate membership in this group, and may feel pressure to manage this personal identity to the “normal” public. Self-esteem is important in pursuing goals, and self-esteem may be lost as a result of moving back home with parents. Those who move back home may be seen as part of a stigmatized group, and they might not be as likely to pursue goals such as getting a job or making a strong effort to pay back student loans (Stets and Burke 2000). Further, people with high self-esteem are more likely to persist in

the face of difficult tasks than are those who have low self esteem (DiPaula and Campbell 2002; Crocker et al. 2006).

This study explores the feelings, motivations and experiences of adults who have moved back in with parent(s). It seeks to examine how they describe their self-esteem, self appraisal, and identity as a result of this transition. This project describes whether those who move back in with their parents feel stigmatized by their peers, and examines how they negotiate these effects and what these experiences mean to them.

There is a myriad of identity and self-esteem literature, and several studies analyze parents' attitudes about adult children moving back home. The studies that have been conducted about the parents have been primarily quantitative. While the nature of that research method is important for being able to generalize to the population, the emotions and experiences of the respondents cannot be accurately captured quantitatively. Quantitative research is appropriate when the goal is to generalize to a population, but qualitative research is preferable when attempting to capture the true feelings of participants, which were my ultimate focus. Despite the emerging research about the parents, there has been nothing related to how the children feel about the process.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

There has been no previous research linking theories of identity, self-esteem, and self-concept and the consequences that arise after an individual graduating college moves back in with parents. Previous literature focuses on parental happiness with coresident living arrangements, parent-child relationships, and the characteristics of the children who return home, all of which provide interesting starting points to begin my own research.

Many studies about parental happiness with the coresidence of adult children do not differentiate between children who have returned home and children who never left (Mitchell 1998). Research shows that having an adult child return home can have a wide range of impacts on family well-being as a whole. Numerous media portrayals have shown adult children returning home in a negative light (Mitchell 1998). The media also depicts these adult children as being a generation that is “uniquely slow in establishing independence from parents” (White 1994: 82). While coresidence is almost universally more for the child’s benefit than the parents’, research shows that the findings appear to be contradictory. For example, Mitchell and Gee (1996) found that parents had negative reactions to their adult children returning home when children left and returned multiple

times. They also had negative reactions when children left the home the first time for work or school, rather than leaving for independence. This is mainly because parents may partially expect children who leave home to experience independence to return, and they expect those who leave for work or school to be permanently launched. The return of an adult child can create a financial and psychological burden for the parents. The once “empty nest” is now a “crowded nest”, and some parents feel that the return of their child represents failure of themselves as parents (Schnaiberg and Goldenberg 1989). The parents in this study who report unhappiness note that there is interpersonal conflict or turmoil between themselves and the child. Parents also had problems with lack of privacy and independence, child’s messiness or unwillingness to help with chores or other household tasks. However, these data also describe a high percentage of parents who were happy and experienced marital satisfaction despite the fact that their adult children were returning home. Parents receive satisfaction as a result of the direct parent-child relationships (Aquilino and Supple 1991). In these cases, if the child helped with housework and other tasks and if the child and parents enjoyed positive interpersonal interactions, the likelihood of parental happiness was much greater (Mitchell 1998). Parents who experienced satisfaction with an adult child returning home also noted the enjoyment of companionship or friendship and having the family together. Even if there are some negative effects of an adult child returning home, these can be lessened if the child has taken on some aspect of a traditional adult role, such as engaging in full-time employment.

There have also been studies done on the different variables related to the family that lead an adult child to return home and coreside with parents. Children who are

unmarried, male, and returning to a family in which there has not been divorce or remarriage were likely to move back home (Schnaiberg and Goldenberg 1989; Aquilino 1990). Families that have experienced marital dissolution or remarriage were less likely to have adult children returning home, as were families in which a step parent was present or the parent was single (Aquilino 1990).

Theory

A young adult is an individual who is between the stages of adolescence and mature adulthood. Some young adults go to college and subsequently return home and remain financially dependent on their parents into their twenties. Young adults who return home are depicted as social and economic failures who are unable to fulfill parental expectations of autonomy (Mitchell 1998), and this could have a deleterious effect on their identity, self-esteem, and self-concept. This research is rooted in symbolic interactionism and draws on identity theory and theories of self-esteem and self-appraisal to explore the consequences of moving back home with parents. Symbolic interactionism was the foundation for this study, and Mead and Cooley provided the framework from which this research project has centered around. Symbolic interactionism is the idea that meanings are given to situations through interaction and interpretation. Identity theory has a long standing history in the writings of Mead and Cooley with their proposals that feedback from significant others provide the basis for individuals' self-appraisals (Lundgren 2004). The dominant proposition in the sociology of self argues that our self-concepts reflect the responses and appraisals of others (Gecas 1982). Self-appraisals can be understood as the "cognitive and evaluative components of self-reference that are

presumed to occur reflexively through a process of role taking” (2004: 269). Mead (1934) argues that we see ourselves as we think others see us, and Cooley (1902) observed that the reactions of others provide the viewpoint from which we come to define our attributes. We use cues, clues, and feedback from others to construct and modify our behavior and beliefs in certain groups and situations (Hogg and Reid 2006). Currently, the concept of identity carries the full weight of the need for a sense of who one is, together with an often overwhelming change in the groups and networks in which people and their identities are embedded and in the societal structures in which those networks are embedded (Howard 2000).

People strive to attain and hold a positive social identity, thus enhancing their self-esteem. In maintaining this high self-esteem, they gain positive regard from others (Lundgren 2004). Our social identity is derived from how we compare our opinions and abilities against the opinions and abilities of others, particularly in an in-group and out-group setting (Festinger 1954; Tajfel 1982). We see ourselves as members of a certain in-group, and self-esteem is affected during this comparison process. The core of our identity is the categorization of the self as an occupant of a role, and the incorporation of the meanings and expectations associated with that role (Stets and Burke 2000). By taking on different role identities, we adopt self meanings and expectations to accompany the role and depending on the evaluation of the role, our self-esteem either increases or decreases.

As I have previously stated, self-esteem is an important component of one’s identity. Self-esteem is an individual’s overall positive evaluation of self. People seek to maintain or increase their self-esteem and tend to do so by putting themselves in

situations that will promote self-verification (Cast and Burke 2002). Self-esteem can be understood as a central component of basic identity processes, and the desire for self-esteem motivates individuals to seek both verifying and enhancing social relationships (Cast and Burke 2002). Self-esteem is the function of two processes: the reflected appraisals of significant others in one's social environment in the form of social approval, and the individual's feelings of efficacy and competence derived from his or her own perceptions of the effects he or she has on his or her environment (Franks and Marolla 1976). An important issue pertinent to self-esteem is the fact that having good self-esteem helps one persist in the face of failure, difficult situations, and can cause better performance, interpersonal success, happiness and even healthier lifestyles (Baumeister et al. 2003; Crocker et al. 2006).

An interesting link between identity theory and the various theories of self-esteem can be found in the literature on self-concept. Much like identity and self-esteem, the self-concept is both a social product and social force. Self-concept is not a fixed entity, but a dynamic structure that is formulated via factors and through interaction with the social environment (Rosenberg 1989; English and Chen 2007). It incorporates and is influenced by the individual's location in the social structure, and this location has a direct impact on the actor's self-esteem when compared with others in the social structure. The focus is on the social production of the personal self (Callero 2003). If the location is within a stigmatized group, the individual may face stereotypes and limitations from members of the non-stigmatized group. The stereotypes could cause lowered self-esteem and self-appraisal. Members of a stigmatized group could also conceal their real social identity as to avoid the stereotypes and negative reactions.

Moreover, studies on the life course perspective can be very applicable when analyzing instances of previously launched young adults returning to the home of their parents. The life course perspective analyzes the relationship between norms, expectations, and the timing and sequencing of various events and life stages among individuals (Mitchell 1998). Common events include going to school, getting a job, and starting a family. Theoretically, age is a determining factor which specifies appropriate times for the stages and transitions, and returning home when one is supposed to be moving on to a new transition throws traditional age transitions off schedule (Settersten and Hagestad 1996; Smith 2004). However, Elder (1985) argues that the contexts in which adults are returning to the home of their parents (economic climates, delayed transitions of marriage and family) are helping to redefine the life transition and make returning home more normative.

Gaps in the Literature

There are significant gaps in the literature about the experiences of adult children who move back home. While there are numerous studies on the parents of these children, there are few studies about the children themselves. The few studies that have been done on the topic of previously launched adults have been largely quantitative, using telephone surveys and secondary analyses of previous survey data. These studies do not explore the experiences and emotions of the children who have moved back home, as a qualitative study could do. The number of adult children moving back in with parents is increasing, and it would be reasonable to “anticipate that the incompletely launched young adult phenomenon is likely to endure for the next few decades” (Schnaiberg and Goldenberg

1989). Consequently, further studies must be done in order to understand the implications that this trend has for those who are experiencing it.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In order to explore the experiences of college graduates who have moved back in with their parents, I chose a qualitative methodological approach. Qualitative research seeks primarily to understand social processes in context (Esterberg 2002). It tries to understand the experiences of an individual or member of a group in detail, rather than generalizing to the population under study. In-depth interviews are the best qualitative method when the researcher wants to understand the feelings or experiences of participants. I researched the experiences of college graduates who move back in with their parents, and how these experiences influence their identity, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. By utilizing a semi-structured, in-depth interview, I was able to direct the topic of conversation to follow my research questions, while letting the participant be the guide of the interview.

Due to the open nature of exchange of information that a semi-structured interview allows, each of my interviews was tailored to each participant. I interviewed with sixteen individuals who met the requirements for participation in this study. Respondents were currently living with their parents, or had moved back with their parents and since moved out at the time of the interview.

Sample Characteristics

The sample consisted of eight men and eight women who had graduated from college and moved back in with their parents. Ten respondents were currently living with their parents and six had moved back home and since moved out. After I conducted the interviews, I found out that one of the six had returned home for the second time after living on her own for about a year. Table 1 shows the ages of the respondents ranged from 21 to 27 years at the time of the interviews (See Appendix A). This table lists the interviews by chronological order. Twelve of the respondents were Caucasian, three were Hispanic, and one was mixed (African American and Caucasian). Thirteen of the respondents had parents who were married, two were divorced, and one was widowed. The respondents' parents held a variety of occupations, but all the occupations denoted at least a middle class socioeconomic status. Parents' occupations included engineer, hospital administrator, lawyer, architect, independent consultant, chief financial officer, accountant, surgeon, pathologist, and builder. The duration of time spent living back at home ranged from three months to two and a half years. Five of the sixteen respondents were in relationships at the time of the interview, and seven of the respondents were in relationships at the time they were living back at home. Thirteen of the respondents were employed while living at home.

The names of the participants were replaced with pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. Other identifying characteristics, such as the respondents' alma mater, and hometown, were also changed. Nine of the respondents graduated from a top tier university, four graduated from a second tier university, two graduated from private liberal arts colleges, and one graduated from an Ivy League university.

Data Collection

The sample was gathered using a purposive strategy as well as snowball sampling. The purposive strategy intentionally uses “sample research participants for the specific perspectives they may have” (Esterberg 2002: 93). Using initial interviewees that I knew had graduated college and moved back home, I asked them to refer me to others that had experienced the same thing. I mentioned my study to some people in the department where I attend graduate school, and found that my friends and colleagues knew of individuals that fit the requirements of the study. I contacted these potential participants via phone or Internet.

I interviewed participants in locations of their choice. The interviews were conducted at their homes, restaurants, coffee shops, bookstores, and my office. A majority of the respondents did not reside in the same city that I do, thus, long distance traveling was required to conduct fifteen of the interviews. Prior to conducting each interview, respondents were given a consent form that they were asked to read and sign. I asked each respondent for demographic data, some of which were also gathered during the interview itself. Interviews lasted approximately thirty to forty-five minutes and were tape recorded and subsequently transcribed. The interview guide (Appendix B) consisted of open ended questions and was organized into three main themes: 1) educational background of respondent and decisions for moving back home, 2) effects of moving back in, and 3) stigma related to moving back home. The interview questions predominantly pertained to the respondents’ experiences with and feelings about moving back home, as well as the reactions of friends, family, and new acquaintances.

Additionally, I explored the dynamics of the familial relationship upon moving back home, and likes and dislikes. To conclude the interviews, I asked each respondent to give advice to someone who was going to be moving back home after college graduation, based on the respondent's experiences of a similar situation.

Data Analysis

I used a two-stage model of coding as described by Esterberg (2002). The initial stage, or open coding, was done in order to identify themes and categories that were of interest in regards to the research topic. Carefully re-reading my transcripts allowed me to see the emerging and recurring themes. By using focused coding, I was able to look more closely at the themes and was able to group my data into important thematic categories. Using these techniques, I was able to identify several recurring patterns among college graduates who moved back in with their parents.

This thesis is not intended to generalize to all college graduates who have moved back in with their parents. Rather, the purpose is to describe the emotions, experiences, and feelings of those college graduates that were interviewed for this study. This study also aims to investigate whether or not those who move back in with their parents feel stigmatized as a result. The findings are meant to serve as a starting point for further research on the topic of previously launched adults, as these experiences relate to the children themselves.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

All of the participants in my study had individual circumstances that led them to move back home as well as unique experiences while living at home. While each respondent's specific experience was ultimately different, many had shared similarities. Five main themes emerged from the interviews: 1) actualization and the after-effects of moving in with parents, 2) motivators and factors surrounding the move back home, 3) expectations and realities of reactions from peers and others about the move back home, 4) respondents' social lives and how they are affected by moving back home, and 5) stigma management and rationalization techniques.

Actualization and After-Effects of Moving Home: Reluctance and Doubts

For many respondents, the actualization of having to move back in with their parents after graduation consisted of negative feelings about the event. Furman (2006) suggests that making the decision to move back home with parents is a very difficult one for most "boomerangers" (children who leave and return to the family home). In this study, many respondents "weren't looking forward to it" and realized it was "a step backwards just going from freedom and kind of being out on your own to being back with your parents", but some did not seem to mind or think of it as a particularly big deal. Jean decided to move in with her sister and her husband and child instead of moving back

in with her parents, who lived close by. When asked how she felt about the move, she said:

It was not a good feeling, 'cause when I left I graduated early from high school very specifically to leave my small town and the thought of going to school for 4 years and work my butt off to get good grades, I really thought that I would have a better job lined up by the time I graduated so it was very disconcerting to have to go home and move back in with my parents after have living some- after having lived somewhere else for 4 years.

Some of the respondents did not have negative views on moving home. Lenny, a respondent who had returned home after studying abroad, felt that returning home would be “a homecoming in the sense that I wasn’t burned out on my hometown, it’s kind of reconnecting with my roots.” Two respondents, Loren and Allie, moved home with the expectation to student-teach for a semester and then move out of the family home. They both stayed at home for longer than expected, but did not mind the move at first because it was supposed to be temporary. As they realized that they were going to be living there longer than expected, they were “happy but not so excited, [it was] nice to be home cause I missed them but I didn’t want to be around them all the time.” Layla found a job in her hometown, the main reason she moved back in with parents. She moved home to take her job in as a financial planner, and “just, lived with my parents and so while I was studying to pass my licenses exams so I wouldn’t have to work I could like actually study and make sure I passed them” and thought she would move out when she started her job. Bryan, an Ivy League graduate, was “not too worried about it” as friends were pressuring him to move to New York or Boston. With his financial situation out of control, Bryan said:

I think it was more stressful thinking of moving to Boston or New York without having money so it was more of like I felt safe moving back home. Just because

you know, my parents won't expect too much as long as I take care of myself, keep after myself, then they don't really worry about me so...

Louise and Clayton were among the respondents who had the most negative expectations regarding the move back home. When asked how he felt about moving back home, Clayton replied, "It sucks." Louise was worried about a main obstacle to moving back home: privacy—or lack thereof. Furman (2006) says that while adults may be gaining many things by moving back home, "you'd also be giving up a lot, including your privacy, a certain amount of autonomy, and the ability to choose your own brand of toilet paper" (2006: 24). When asked about how she felt when she realized she was going to be moving back home, Louise said:

I was definitely nervous. Lack of privacy, moving back in, if we would have conflicts and like arguments like when I was in high school and also my cat. I brought my cat and my mom didn't want me to bring the cat at first ...
...I was a little bit worried just mainly about the privacy and I guess my own personal freedom even though, like I had it for 4 and ½ years, and losing that when I came back, and I lost a little bit but it wasn't, it wasn't as bad as I thought.

While the responses from the participants about their feelings of moving back home were rather varied, in one part of the interview or another they all expressed discontent with living back at home. Respondents were hesitant and dismayed at the prospect of moving home because of what it meant in terms of their identity. These individuals were going from being independent, self sufficient, successful students to living back at home with parents. Their identities were strongly correlated with their roles of students, and now they had reached a point in their lives where they had no clear-cut defined role expectations. They were in a transitional and unfamiliar territory, and moving back home with parents forced respondents to renegotiate their self-concepts as a result of now belonging to a different social group.

Motivations to Move Home: Uncertain Futures and Financial Affairs

There were multiple reasons why participants moved back home with parents, but three main motivations emerged. One motivation was lack of employment following graduation. Lee, Robby, Shane, and Jean moved home because they had not found jobs prior to graduation. Two of them are employed in their hometown, and two moved out of their parent's house after they found jobs in other cities.

Another motivation for moving home was the chance to "regroup" due to lack of other alternatives. Maria and Ruthie moved home after graduation because they had no other plans and felt they needed to regroup after spending so much time away from home. Ruthie wanted to come home and "figure out what I needed to apply to," and was disappointed but felt it was "kinda nice just to have someone take care of me so I could take a break, and regroup." Maria had originally moved out of Texas after graduation, but finding that living in another state was not what she had expected, decided to move back in with her family because "everything was kind of ambiguous."

The third motivation, finances, was the most common among respondents and seemed to be an underlying motivation for most of the respondents' to move back home. Maria, Clayton, Lenny, and Bryan moved home because they were in debt and did not have enough money to explore other options. However, among many of the respondents who moved home and subsequently moved out on their own, finances were one of the reasons they cited as to why they stayed so long. Loren said that she was not sure of how long she wanted to stay at home, "it was debatable, I wanted to wait until I started making some money first, my main goal was to make some money," and that is why she

lived at home for a year before moving out on her own. Interestingly, Robby's main reason for staying home was finances, but not lack of. He said:

I could live I could live on my own and support myself, save money but I'm in a situation right now where 90%, 90 to 95% of my paycheck is going straight to my bank account... I mean, I'm 24 years old, I been out of school 2 years and I mean I've got more money in my bank account than I can, I guarantee any 24 year old does. I mean, if I live at home for, if I'm going to stay there another year, I'm going to have you know over \$100,000 in the bank. Talk about cash, no debt, so, I mean I've already started a Roth IRA for my retirement, tax free retirement, put the max amount in this year, put the max amount next year, and put the max amount in until I retire, so hopefully I'll have a couple million by the time I want to retire. Tax free, so. Maybe live at home a couple years early, it's a lot easier later on in life. So... we'll see how that one goes though.

Robby's experience was most certainly atypical when talking about money and financial situations, although his story could be used to describe some of the perks of living at home. While some respondents made no mention of money as a determining factor of why they chose to move back or stay at home so long, every one of the respondents stated that among the things they liked the most about living at home, free rent, free food and no bills were at the top of the list. Once at home, the decisions to stay or move out were also varied from respondent to respondent. Financial reasons were an underlying factor for many of the respondents who chose to move back home. Experts are calling this generation "Generation D" (for debt) and "Generation B" (for bankrupt) (Furman 2006).

For example, Clayton was in debt and had no other option to move home. He said:

I'm paying all school for myself you know, so I've got \$57,000 worth of loans right now. And I need a new car so... it makes sense not to pay for rent or money... you know in terms of money like I need to pay, start paying off those loans as much as I can as soon as I can, I'm already going to be paying for them for years and years.

Clayton was one of my respondents who was this deep into financial debt and really had no other option but to move home and pay down his student loans. Other respondents cited financial reasons for their decisions to move home, but more in the sense of saving money, not paying down a large sum of accruing loans.

Maria, Bryan, and Lenny also decided to move home because of financial reasons. Maria has a daughter, and was also in debt from school, and not knowing exactly what she wanted to do and a lack of financial independence limited her options of what she was going to be able to do after she graduated. She had some idea, but said that:

It's rough to have a little girl, so I couldn't really, I'm, I'm in debt (laughing). So I didn't really have the means, I didn't want to just jump into a job because I knew that I was going to have to leave it sooner or later to go to school.

Bryan decided to move back home after living in the Northeast and attending an Ivy League university. His parents were unable to help him pay for his schooling, but he was able to get half of his education paid for. This left him with about \$87,000 in school loans. As I have previously stated, the thought of moving to another Northeastern city left Bryan feeling stressed out and upset, and when asked about his situation he said the following:

Really the only reason at first was finances. Most of my friends were moving to like Boston and New York, which are insanely expensive, and I didn't even have enough money to like relocate if I wanted to. So I was like I'll just move back home, maybe save some money and then move out there... So at first it was strictly financial but now it's more of like I'm sort of here to help my little brother too 'cause my parents' relationship is really rocky and I don't know I just feel like he needs another male person in the house to like make sure he goes to college and everything. So and those are really the only two reasons but other than that. So like mainly finances, I mean I'm trying to save money to like buy a car.

Bryan goes on to say that while he first thought his move was going to be only temporary, he is thinking of waiting until his younger brother graduates from high school,

which will be in four years. Another respondent, Lenny, was living abroad for nine months, and described that “when I moved back from Spain I didn’t have any money and so I decided to move home... I didn’t have a better plan. I didn’t have any money so...”

Lack of planning and other alternatives was also a common reason for respondents’ deciding to move back home. Jean moved back to her hometown and chose to live with her sister while searching for jobs. She said that she moved home because “I decided that it was too hard to try and pay for an apartment here and look for jobs at the same time so I moved home so I would have time to look for jobs.” She also said that she did not apply for very many jobs before graduation, so she had no prospects of a full-time job with which she could support herself and pay her bills. Joffrey, who graduated from a private liberal arts college, decided to return home after “I actually realized that a liberal arts degree is not gonna do very much for me.” Consequently, Joffrey moved back home and enrolled at a university in his hometown with hopes of getting into medical school. Likewise, Shane “didn’t have any plans for a job or anywhere to go,” so he moved to his hometown and found a job in construction. Lee and Robby also had not looked for jobs prior to graduation, and this was the determining factor for the both of them that compelled them to move back home. While Lee job searched while at home and then moved to another city to take a job, Robby has been living at home for almost three years and is working as a manager of a store in the mall there.

Respondents moved home for a variety of reasons, and have continued to live at home for a number of other reasons. These reasons coincide with the reasons put forth by Furman (2006), which include financial problems, such as high credit card or student loan debt, tight job markets and lack of opportunities, prohibitive cost of housing, and in

some cases a reluctance to grow up and accept responsibilities. For many of the respondents, a lack of alternatives was a primary factor in their decision to move home. Today, more resources and skill accumulations are required before a successful launching to adulthood can be completed. While rational choice theory may be an over-simplistic notion of human nature, it is certainly applicable to my respondents and their decisions to move back home. To some, deciding to moving home after graduating college may seem like the actor will incur more costs than benefits, however it is clear that moving home provides a stable situation where the individuals have a lower likelihood of failure as opposed to moving out and venturing the world on their own.

Expectations and Realities of Others' Reactions: The Best Choice at this Point

One of my research questions involved the self-esteem, self-appraisal, and identity of those who return home. I thought that returning home would have a detrimental effect on the “boomeranger’s” self-esteem, and that the peers and cohort of the individual would have negative and/or judgmental reactions. If our self evaluations are affected by the evaluations which others have of us and how we perceive those evaluations (Mead 1934) and utilize the reactions of others to provide the viewpoint from which we come to define our attributes (Cooley 1902), then negative reactions from others would in turn make our perception of ourselves be less favorable. Subsequently, this could have an adverse effect on our self-esteem.

Contrary to my assumptions, my respondents said they did not experience any negative reactions from their peers or friends. However, as I will discuss later, many of the respondents utilized stigma management and rationalization techniques and

justifications while talking to me. This leads me to believe that despite the fact that they did not receive necessarily negative reactions from friends and peers, they still feel that they are engaging in something that is unusual or abnormal. When asked whether friends and peers had negative reactions about respondents moving home, most of them said that they did not. Some of the respondents, such as Lee and Jean, said that “it’s pretty common in my hometown” and “there was a couple people who were back in my hometown that I graduated with so that wasn’t too bad, I mean there was still a couple people to hang out with.” Many of the respondents said that their friends were understanding of their particular situations, and thought it was the best decision for each respondent. For Robby and Joffrey, they said to their friends “it wasn’t a big issue” and “everyone who’s a good friend doesn’t care at all.” Additionally, some of the respondents had close friends or significant others who had also returned home, and some even had friends who were jealous of the fact that they were living at home again. Layla explains that her friends and co-workers’ response was:

Well I don’t, I don’t think they thought, well actually they were like “oh that’s so smart, you’re saving a lot of money”...Like “your parents live in town, you get along with them, like y’all have a good relationship anyways like I wish I would have lived with my parents for awhile, I wish I would have been able to save up money” and stuff like that. And also I think because I was so young, like everyone I work with is a lot older than me.

As far as friends being jealous, Shane described his co-workers as “being all jealous.” Likewise, Elise said her friends told her that since she didn’t have a job she should “move home you know if you don’t have a job... just stay away from the job market, and they all thought it was a positive thing I guess.” She said that she was happy that her friends did not make her feel bad about moving home, and after she moved home she traveled to

Africa to work with genocide orphans in Rwanda. She finished her travels in Africa, and is living at home again until she finds a job.

Ruthie, Allie, and Layla all had significant others who had also returned to the homes of their parents. Ruthie said that her boyfriend “understood because he went back home too after he graduated in May, he went back home for the summer and we were both kind of at home and complaining about our parents together.” When asked how her romantic interest reacted to her decision to move back home, Allie said that “the romantic interest, he was actually living at home too, so he couldn’t really say anything.” Layla said her coworkers did not have negative reactions to her move, and neither did her friends. She said:

Well two of my friends that lived in my hometown lived with their parents too so... obviously they didn’t care. I don’t know I mean none of my friends cared, none of my friends were like “Oh you’re a loser” ...I don’t think anybody really cared. And, I guess I was like semi dating with someone but he lived with his parents too.

Jean and Shane said that they discussed the move with their significant others, who at the time were living in different cities than they were. Jean said that she and her boyfriend had discussed her situation and “decided that maybe, that maybe it was the best decision for my life at that point.” Shane, who plans on moving to be with his girlfriend in February, said that his friends’ reactions were “no one way or the other. They didn’t really say” and his girlfriend “knew it was best for the time being. And that eventually we would get together.” For Jean and Shane, moving home was a decision that would affect not only their own lives, but the lives of their long-term partners as well. They discussed

the decision with their partners, and as a dyad decided that it would be the best thing to do at the time in order to save money and get their lives more on track.

While most of the respondents' friends, peers and significant others had favorable reactions to the respondents moving back home, Allie's and Clayton's friends had ambivalent reactions to them moving back home. Allie expressed that one of her friends in particular said "just that my town is lame, don't go back. And to go somewhere else. Mainly my friend was asking me to move to Houston." When asked how she felt about her friend's reaction, Allie said, "I kind of felt the same way. I didn't really want to come back home but it made the most sense so..." When asked about his friends' reactions, Clayton said "two of my friends kind of wanted me to live with them at first but they you know, they did the same thing as me [moved home after graduation]." Jean had an experience with the locals in her town when she returned home and was working at a restaurant there to help pay bills while living at her sister's house. When I asked her if she had met anyone new living back at home, and if they had any reactions to her moving back, she said:

I mean I was working at a restaurant that I hadn't worked at before but my sister had worked at, so I mean I knew some of the people but a lot of the people were new so I mean I had to explain to them that I was living at home.

Interviewer: And did they have any specific reactions?

I mean some people would like make jokes about it like "Oh well you went to school and you just had to come home and move home with your parents" so I mean it wasn't, it wasn't really that big of a deal because they were all waiters in my town so I mean.

Interviewer: So they didn't make you feel...

Right, yeah. There's no one in my town that was gonna make me feel insecure about graduating from college and coming and living at home. You know what I mean?

Despite the coworkers' reactions and jokes, Jean took the incident at work in stride and remained confident in her abilities as an independent young woman. She went on to explain to me that moving home with the intentions of looking for jobs elsewhere did not work out as she had expected, as she felt obligated to help her sister and parents with things. Because of this, she moved back to her college town to live with her boyfriend and take a job as a manager at a restaurant where she had been previously employed during college.

Finding out that friends and peers had generally apathetic reactions to the respondents moving home was surprising. I think there could be a variety of reasons for the reactions that my respondents describe. There is a likelihood that the friends and peers really did not care about the respondents returning home. However, another choice, which one respondent describes, could be an alternative explanation for the reactions (or lack thereof) that the respondents were getting. When asked about people's reactions, Bryan said:

Not really. I don't, I don't think, I don't know if it's just because they're trying to, I don't know if they'd have like a negative reaction towards it and they're just trying to be nice and not say anything or... Or whether it, it's just cause it doesn't bother them whatsoever. So I mean I'm not sure.

While Bryan was the only respondent to explore this explanation of peers' reactions, I found it interesting that he would think people would just try to be nice and not say anything. Goffman's theory suggests that Bryan's coworkers are benevolent in order to soften and/or ameliorate the situation or shame that Bryan may feel as a result of living at home (1963). His coworkers' reactions could also be explained by rituals of everyday life, or scripts that help us get through uncomfortable situations that serve to smooth

interactions between parties (Goffman 1959). In situations construed as awkward or uncomfortable, people will tend to act in a way as to minimize discomfort to both parties involved.

Social Lives: Disrupted and Difficult

Information about social lives was revealed by questions such as “How did you feel about moving back home?”, “Do you have any privacy issues?”, and “What do you dislike the most about living back at home?” I found out that the respondents had their social lives altered or hampered in some way as a direct result of living back at home.

Many of the respondents discuss a change in social life and behaviors after being asked how they felt when they realized they were going to be returning home. Lee said that he wasn’t looking forward to returning home because “I guess I didn’t want to do the same things I was doing when I was living on my own just out of respect for them.”

Many respondents discussed not coming home late out of respect for their parents, and not going out and getting “wasted” now that they were living back at home. Allie’s parents even gave her a curfew when she moved home. She had to be home by three in the morning, and if she was not going to be back by then, she was expected to call. She said “that was always just kind of awkward because I didn’t want to say I was spending the night at my friend’s house every night. And I didn’t want to be like ‘yeah I’m shacking up with my boyfriend’ so... yeah so it was pretty much it.”

When I asked Robby if he had met any women while he was living at home, he responded:

Yeah that’s a good question. Living at home with your parents does hamper your social life, that’s for sure. Not in the aspect that you can’t bring them [women]

home or, anything like that but just you don't hang out with your friends as much, I don't think. Which in turn you don't meet as many people, no, social life definitely slowed down when I moved home. Now that I moved home.

Other male respondents described similar experiences. Joffrey and Bryan both said that they thought part of the reason they had not gotten into relationships with people was because they were still living at home. Joffrey said

Yeah well I mean I've, I don't think its because I live at home but I definitely have been single since I've been there. And it might, I don't know at one side it's I don't feel like I should be bringing a girl back to their house, since it is their house and not mine. But I don't know I've also been pretty busy so that's another reason why I haven't...

Bryan said that he thinks that if he met someone and had to tell them he was living at home "it would be difficult to do," and he hasn't been trying to find someone to date since "living at home." Not only did respondents describe not being able to start relationships because of living at home, they also discussed the awkwardness associated with bringing a member of the opposite sex home, whether they were dating this person or just "hooking up." Robby, Clayton, and Alex discussed the difficulty of negotiating a sexual relationship with a partner while living back at home. When asked about whether he experienced any privacy issues living back at home, Robby said:

Oh there's definitely a privacy issue because my parents' room is directly across from my room and they sleep with the door open so the room looks straight at my room, so if I want to bring a girl home it makes it a little bit difficult with, for them not to know. I mean I could do it, they wouldn't care, but it's kind of like I don't want my parents knowing about that so.

Shane, who was in a long-term, long-distance relationship, indicated annoyance with his situation when his girlfriend would visit from out of town. Shane said that his sister would "barge in on me and my girlfriend when I really don't want her to be in here [his room]." He said that she wouldn't knock, and his girlfriend thought it was "odd and

weird.” Situations where there is a lack of privacy could potentially place a strain on long- term, long-distance relationships where the partners only got to see each other sporadically. Shane said that the lack of privacy when his girlfriend was visiting was the one thing he hated the most about living at home.

I asked respondents to tell me what it was like when they were trying to meet members of the opposite sex. Clayton said “people don’t want to come back to your house if your parents are going to be in the living room, you know?” Similarly, Alex said that he “hasn’t had any, haven’t brought any girls over, because that’s kind of awkward.” Some said that while they still felt comfortable going outside of the parents’ home and meeting to party with friends, they did not feel as comfortable bringing friends over to the house. Loren, Alex and Lenny expressed these feelings when asked about their likes and dislikes of living at home. Loren said that she “still felt bad having a lot of friends over, just cause it’s an intrusion on them. So, having lots of friends over and that would probably be the only thing that really wasn’t, that I didn’t like.” Alex said that he “doesn’t like to bring people over to the house to party and stuff like that.” I asked respondents what their least favorite aspect of living at home was, and Lenny replied:

Well I guess I like to, I like to be very social. I like to have di-, like not parties, but I’d say dinner parties and I don’t have not even the facilities to myself at all times and I don’t have, I don’t have exclusive privilege over the domain of my house.

Lenny described to me feelings of having to be considerate of others living in the house, and thought that having dinner parties would not only be a strain on his parents, but he felt that since the house was not his, he did not have the right to ask everyone to leave so he could host something.

In conjunction with privacy issues, some respondents described instances in which their parents treated them like young children again. When Lee was living at home, his mother would wake him up in the mornings, “which was weird,” and Clayton described his mother waking him up as well. With more of a favorable reaction toward the experience, he said, “Mom makes sure I wake up in the morning cause I’m a heavy sleeper, you know, and then come home and eat dinner around the table, you know?” Layla described disliking her experiences of her parents asking where she was going and with whom:

No I mean there was always the I guess the biggest adjustment, was that you get so used to not having to like tell anybody where you are, no one’s like really being concerned with where you are, and when I would leave to like go out, my parents would be like “Where are y’all going?” it’s like “What do you mean where am I going, I’m going to a bar” you know what I mean? I guess I could tell them but I was always just like “We don’t really know where we’re going” because its, that was one of the only awkward things. When I was like getting ready to go out and my parents would like still be like sitting down on the couch like watching TV and I would like go to leave and I would be like “Okay I’m leaving” and my parents were like “Bye!!” and everything, it’s just like, I’m 23 years old, why am I saying bye to my parents before I go out? That was awkward, that was the only thing that was awkward I guess.

Ruthie said that while it was nice to be able to regroup and have someone take care of her, she kept “asking them [her parents] to treat me more like a person and less like a small child.” Ruthie said that her mother would follow her around and give her very little privacy, and said that “she’d [her mother] follow me to the bathroom talking to me and I’m like “MOM! Can you please leave, I have to pee!”...it was bad.” To a lesser extreme, Elise had to alter her life somewhat after moving back home. In regards to privacy issues, she said, “To a certain extent there are. When I’m on the phone with my friends I don’t

want to be like ‘Hey I met this really cute guy’ in front of my parents or anything.” She also said, “They don’t really expect [me to do] a lot. They don’t expect more than they expected in high school, they expect less probably.”

Obviously, moving back home is an extremely life changing experience. Going from living completely on your own to living with parents again can be challenging to one’s social life. Bringing members of the opposite sex home, starting relationships, and maintaining independence can prove challenging for some previously launched adults. The men in this study seemed to have particularly emotional responses to their social and sexual lives, or lack thereof. However, trading bills and responsibilities for a few minor social setbacks may seem like a good situation for some, and my respondents tried to make the best out of their situations as possible. Social interaction is paramount for maintaining relationships. Moving back home not only causes one’s social network to change, but also to shrink in a sense. Students in college have vast amounts of peers, professors, and friends to interact and build interpersonal relationships with. Moving back home can decrease the size of a social network to those family members and immediate friends. Comparing the present social life of someone to one’s past social life or even the social lives of others can have an effect on one’s satisfaction (Buunk et al. 2007). If one’s needs are not met as a result of a diminished social life, as is apparent in the lives of many of the respondents in this study, happiness and satisfaction could suffer.

Stigma Management and Rationalizations: I’m Young and Educated

While the data suggest that my respondents’ self-esteem and identities were not adversely affected by the move back home, each of them offered what Goffman (1963)

refers to as stigma management techniques. Stigma refers to something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier. The term, according to Goffman, is referent to an attribute that is deeply discrediting. I was concerned with stigma in regards to one's character, and found that many respondents indirectly justified their living back at home. Respondents also offered rationalizations for the behavior. Matza and Sykes (1957) describe techniques of neutralization that individuals use to justify actions in terms of rationalizations. Rationalizations are developed subsequent to deviant behavior (in this case, moving back home with parents), rationalizations are offered to "protect the individual from self-blame and the blame of others after the act" (1957: 666).

Respondents used their age and status as a college graduate as a rationalization for living back at home. The recentness of graduating, being the youngest one at the workplace, and trying to do things such as apply to graduate school or get an internship were reasons that respondents offered to me during different interviews. Layla said that she did not feel uncomfortable about living back at home because "it wasn't like I was 30 years old and living in my parent's basement." Likewise, Ruthie said that she knows living back at home "is only temporary, it's not like I plan on living with my mom for the next ten years, but I would never move home and not really do anything." Being a college graduate also helped respondents justify why they were living at home. Lee said that graduating from college and then moving back home "wasn't like dropping out and having to move back home." Loren and Lenny also felt the same way. I asked respondents if they thought moving back home was socially acceptable, and Loren replied:

I don't think its acceptable almost if you're not going to do anything and you're just taking advantage of it. But, I definitely think its different with a college

degree because obviously I wanted, I want to do something with my life its not just like I'm just being there to be lazy and you know have somebody else help me out so.

Lenny “tries to raise the understanding with people that I meet that I'm not just a bum sleeping on my parents couch.” He also said that having a college degree makes one a valued member of society. He feels his situation is also different because he has a full time “real” job. Layla also used the “real job” justification as to why it was more socially acceptable for her to be living back at home. Layla said, “if I wouldn't have had a job already and had go home and live with my parents, I would have felt like a failure.”

Some respondents joked about their situations as ways to minimize the severity of the situation. Loren and Clayton both used jokes when asked about how they felt when they told someone new that they were living back at home. Clayton said “I usually tell them [people I meet] it's roommates, that I live with roommates. Roommates I've known since I was born.” Likewise, Loren said that she “likes to call them her roommates.” Elise also said that she has to joke about her situation and “be lighthearted, in a way, because I do feel a little bit like a loser.” Joking was respondents' way of “exercising something other than tact” (Goffman 1963: 136) and taking the main focus off their stigmatizing attribute in uncomfortable situations.

Another justification respondents used was blaming others, or denying responsibility. Denial of responsibility is one of the five ways rationalization occurs (Matza and Sykes 1957). For example, when I asked Layla why she had lived with her parents for such a long period of time, she said:

That wasn't really my choice. Like I wanted to move out once I started working or like at least a month after I started working cause I had the money to do it. I had a good enough job to live on my own and I wanted to live on my own with of my friends. But then they didn't end up getting jobs so they didn't have the means

to move out on their own, so then I was basically living with my parents waiting for them to find jobs, waiting for them to decide to move out, and I got tired of waiting.

Like Layla, Robby said that he could afford to move out on his own if he wanted to.

However, Robby was the only respondent who kept justifying his decision to stay home in terms of the monetary rewards he was gaining from living at home. He discussed his financial situation many times during our interview. Rational choice theory argues that we analyze our decisions in terms of the relative costs and rewards we will incur as a result of said decisions. Like many respondents, saving money was one of the things Robby liked most about living at home, and apparently the amount he was saving was one of the biggest reasons for him to continue living at home for two years.

I mean, I'm 24 years old, I been out of school 2 years and I mean I've got more money in my bank account than I can, I guarantee any 24 year old does. I've been doing a lot of investing and saving money, so...

During the interviews, I asked respondents why they decided to move back home, but never made it seem like they needed to offer me justifications for doing so. Nevertheless, many of the respondents offered different rationalizations on their own, whether or not they were aware of doing so. If the respondents were in fact subconsciously providing rationalizations for their behavior, there could be a part of their psyche that does realize their actions can be considered deviant. As a result of this realization, the respondents may be feeling guilty or shameful, and rationalizing the behavior is the only way they are choosing to externalize their feelings.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study explored the experiences of college graduates who moved back home with their parents. Respondents faced moving home with negative emotions, but many conveyed that the end result was not as bad as they had predicted it would be. Respondents moved home for various reasons, but finances were a main motivator for a majority of respondents. Respondents did not appear to suffer from any damage to their self-esteem or self-appraisal as a result of moving back home. Friends and peers of the respondents did not have negative or judgmental reactions to the respondents moving back home. However, respondents utilized rationalizations and justifications for their decisions during the interviews. Men and women did not seem to differ in their experiences of moving back home, except when it came to aspects of their social lives. Men discussed the difficulty and annoyance of negotiating sexual relationships, while women discussed issues of having groups of friends over. From this study, it appears that men are more adversely affected in the realm of sexual relationships than were women when living back at home. This could be because women more than men are expected to live back at home, and there could be a more stigmatizing aspect to men living back at home, especially when attempting to start a courtship or sexual relationship with a woman.

Previous research (Clemens and Axelson 1985; Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1989, 1998; Schnaiberg and Goldenberg 1989; Mitchell and Gee 1996; Mitchell 1998) focuses mainly on how parents feel and are affected by adult children returning home. Literature on self-esteem and identity can be related to this study, but the findings of various studies of marginalized groups did not correspond with my findings of this particular group. Those that go against group norms, such as moving back home when expected to move out and on with one's life, may face prejudice or discrimination from those who do not go against norms (Rubin and Hewstone 1998; Hogg and Reid 2006). Findings from previous studies were disparate to mine in this regard.

The largest implication on this research relates to the factors surrounding college graduates' decisions to move back home. This study showed that finances were the main reason many of the respondents moved home. A prevalent theme in the economic climate of today is the idea that our generation is the first one that will not be able to attain an equal or better level of living than our parents, and this is certainly a disconcerting thought for many young people. A college degree is no longer a guarantee of a good job and comfortable life. However, it is reassuring to see that while there are changes in the economy, there are also changes in parent/child relationships as well as views on the life course. Obviously, the changes in the life course are directly related to the economic situation of our times. Life course trajectory assumed that young adults were expected to transition to adulthood on a linear path of well-timed events, such as employment, marriage, and parenting (Elder 1998). However, several aspects of this trajectory are variable among the youth population of today. Children are graduating from college,

getting jobs or continuing schooling, but moving back home and delaying marriage and families. Parents are becoming more accommodating of this, and children returning home may not be as big of an issue as it once was.

One of the major strengths of this study is the relevancy of the issue to the current events in our nation. The phenomenon of adult children moving back home is becoming more prevalent than ever, and the existence and continually growing number of this group is merit enough for research. There is certainly potential for the emergence of more adult children moving back home. The fact that this research shows that individuals who are intelligent and capable, and graduate from some of the top colleges and universities in America, are being forced to move back home is relevant as well. The nature of this research allowed me to investigate the experiences and emotions of the individuals who are going through this event, and the emotions that surround such a life-changing affair are not easily addressed with survey data.

Sample size is one of the weaknesses of this study. Sixteen interviews do not provide the amount of information that may be necessary to fully understand what previously launched adults are experiencing. Interviews with respondents from other geographical locations and a more racially diverse respondent pool would also be beneficial to understanding. Social class is an important consideration as well, as those who are members of the lower class were left out of this study. This likely relates to the sampling method used, which limited the search to those people who were in similar social classes. These issues are pertinent to future studies, particularly the race and class intersection. Culturally, certain racial groups do not see living at home, or returning home after leaving, as being deviant. A core element of deeply rooted values of Hispanic

culture is familism (Landale and Oropesa 2007). Living in the family home until the point of marriage, especially for females, is extremely common. Class concepts are important because in some cases, the family may not have enough resources or room to allow an adult child to return to the home. Future studies are important because as indicated, the trend of adult children moving back home with parents is increasing.

Future research could address the long-term implications of moving back in with parents. A longitudinal study would be an interesting way to follow respondents to see how this break in the life course affects other transitions in the life. Examining the differences in those who move back home as related to temporal length of stay, number of returns, and feelings about the situation as related to the individual's age could provide more insight about previously launched adults. My respondents were all relatively young, in their early twenties. This could be one reason as to why they felt moving back home was not out of the ordinary. However, there very well could be differences in opinions as the individuals get older and are still living at the home of their parents. This study could also benefit from concurrently interviewing the parents of the respondent, to see how their ideas and experience differ. Many respondents suggested I interview their parents, and doing so could provide information about the experiences from a different perspective. Sociologists as well as economists could benefit from examining this trend more closely and on a larger scale.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Name	Sex	Age	Ethnicity	Parents' Marital Status	Length of Time at Home	Still Living at Home
Lee	Male	24	Caucasian	Married	3 Months	No
Robby	Male	24	Caucasian	Married	2.5 Years	Yes
Joffrey	Male	23	Caucasian	Married	2 5 Years	Yes
Shane	Male	23	Caucasian	Divorced	1.5 Years	Yes
Maria	Female	26	Hispanic	Married	6 Months	Yes
Jean	Female	21	Caucasian	Married	4 Months	No
Layla	Female	24	Caucasian	Married	7 Months	Yes(Left and Returned)
Allie	Female	24	Caucasian	Married	1.5 Years	No
Clayton	Male	24	Caucasian	Married	6 Months	Yes
Loren	Female	24	Caucasian	Married	1.5 Years	No
Lenny	Male	24	Mixed	Married	9 Months	Yes
Ruthie	Female	24	Caucasian	Divorced	1 Year	Yes
Alex	Male	23	Caucasian	Widowed	9 Months	Yes
Bryan	Male	23	Hispanic	Married	5 Months	Yes
Louise	Female	24	Caucasian	Married	1 Year	No
Elise	Female	23	Caucasian	Married	9 Months	Yes

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide

Background

- A. When did you graduate from college?
- B. What college did you graduate from and what was your major?
- C. When did you move back in with your parents?
- D. What made you decide to move back in with your parents (student debt, no job, the economy, etc?)

Effects of Moving Back In

- A. How did it make you feel when you realized you were going to have to move back in with your parents?
- B. How did your parents react?
- C. How long do you plan to live with your parents?
- D. Tell me about your family and where you moved back to.
- E. Describe the day to day of living back with your parents as an adult who had previously lived on their own.
- F. How did it make you feel if you met someone new and told them you lived with your parents?
- G. How well do you and your parents get along?
- H. Are there any special rules that your parents have for you now that you're back home? What about privacy issues?
- I. Do you feel that you are still in control of your life?
- J. What do you like most about living with your parents?
- K. What do you like least about living with your parents?

Stigma

- A. How did your friends/colleagues/boy/girlfriends react to you moving back home?
- B. How did you feel and or react about their reactions?
- C. Do you think it is socially acceptable to move back home?
- D. Did anyone you know move back home?

Concluding

- A. What advice would you give someone who is moving back home after graduation?

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