More Honky Questions: Food for thought while writing your memoir

On pg. 33, when referring to his father’s family, says that “Every family that experiences a socioeconomic setback must come up with its own narrative of why it happened; ours was “Too far ahead of his time.” Does your family have a narrative about its upward or downward social mobility (if your family experienced mobility)? What is it?

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 discuss experiences at school that provide evidence of a hidden curriculum, lessons that are not part of the formal curriculum, but that students learn by the way the school is organized or how teachers or administrators act. What are some examples of the hidden curriculum in Conley’s schools? What were some of the lessons in your school’s hidden curriculum?

Conley’s experience at his new school in Greenwich Village was very different from his experience at his neighborhood school. How were they different? How was class enacted differently in his new school? Was the middle or high school you went to of predominantly one class or another? Did your family’s social class match that of most of your classmates? If not, what did you try to do to fit in?

On pg. 83, Conley discusses how social class and gender intersect to create a different experience of being a lower class woman and a middle class woman. Can you think of ways that two or more of your identity categories (race, class, gender, immigrant status, sexual orientation, etc) interact to shape way you have experienced your life differently than others?

In Chapter 8 Conley describes a situation where he stole candy bars and a comic book from a store in his neighborhood. He became deviant, mostly because of structural strain: he didn’t have the means to achieve his goal (consumption of the goodies). Are you or were you ever what you would consider a deviant? What made you that way (structural strain, labeling, differential association)?

At the end of Chapter 9, Conley reflects on getting beat up by a neighborhood kid, Sean, and he decides it was the best thing that ever happened to him because it taught him that he was not part of Sean’s crowd (a trouble crowd). He reflects on some possible reasons why he didn’t fall in with that crowd when most of the kids in his neighborhood did. What are some possible reasons that you ended up on the path that you did rather than a path that may have been another option to you?

In Chapter 12, pg. 135, Conley describes how what his father was doing for work at different times in his life made him more or less part of the class system in society. Reflecting on your youth, did your parent(s) have jobs that placed them firmly in the social class system in society? Or were their jobs more loosely affiliated with a social class? How does this shape how you see your own future in the class system of our society?
Conley discusses how he usually only had one black friend at a time – first Marcus, then Jerome. This is somewhat surprising since he lived in a mostly black and Puerto Rican neighborhood. Did you have any (many) friends of different racial/ethnic groups while growing up? Why or why not?

In chapter 15, Conley talks about how grown up he felt at age 12 after his friend, Jerome had been shot. Do you feel like an adult? If so, was there some event that made you feel like you had reached adulthood? If you don’t feel like an adult, why not? What do you think will make you feel adult?