

The Impact of Social Stratification on People's Perception and Identities

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Abstract

There has been extensive research done regarding the topic of ethnic/socioeconomic backgrounds affecting the way people view themselves and others. How do socioeconomic factors such as race and class, affect college students self-perceptions at SUNY Oswego? To probe this question we recruited four volunteer participants (3 females;1 male), who were students at The State University of New York, College at Oswego. Participants were asked to complete a set of 10-14 interview questions pertaining to race, socioeconomic status, and gender in relation to self-perception. A thematic analysis was used to assess the data. The findings showed three reappearing themes, including financial factors, respect, and the importance of social classes. These three themes showed similarities in the way that the participants perceived themselves, as well as others.

The Impact of Social Stratification on People's Perception and Identities

Throughout history of research there have been many topics that have been studied by different scholars to prove a variety of matters, and expand our knowledge behind measures, or simply gage a full in depth understanding of a topic in order to help each other stay informed with information that's vetted by other scholars. In addition, the research we are conducting contends that the material possessions in which people grow up and live in have a lasting effect on their personal and social identities. Thus, can influence the way they think and feel about their social environment and significant features of their social behaviour. Moreover, this project is interested in understanding people's experiences and identities within social class stratification through perception; Recognizing that race, class, and economic experiences are all factors that contribute to how people form relationships and practice relationships through the use of self-perception. We would like to examine the impacts that social class stratification, race, and economic experiences have on individuals, in order to unveil the complexities surrounding social classifications, and how they relate to the way people form their identity through self-perception. By utilizing different previous academic studies that offers perspectives tailored towards the topic of this research, and to provide a foundation of information that's vetted by other academic institutions, in order to conduct an in-depth research project on the matter of social class and perception/how it impacts one's identity.

Literature Review

Prior research has found that there is a correlation between individuals being affected by their social class, and ultimately influence people's self-perception based on where your social category falls, which can affect the way people interact with others. For instance, prior study written by Antony S. R. Manstead (2018) on *How socioeconomic status impacts thought, feelings, and behaviour*, asserts that relative to middle-class opposite, lower/working-class individuals are less likely to view themselves in terms of their socioeconomic status and there is a likelihood to have interdependent self-concepts; they are also more disposed to explain social occurrence in situational terms, because their are seen as people having a lower sense of personal control. While, Manstead (2018) focused on personal control and self-concept, other researchers have focused on self-esteem and politeness. In addition, we also looked at another article done on Positive Illusion theory. The theory contends that in order to maintain self-esteem people can formulate unrealistic, exaggerated positive perception of themselves in many ways (Barkow, 1975; Pfeffer & Cialdini, 1998; Taylor & Brown, 1988 as cited in Anderson et al, 2006). The study also suggests that in the context of a group, people are often more accurate about their self-perception and do not over exaggerate or enhance their status in group situations. As they believed people would not want to engage in status-self enhancement for risk of being socially excluded from groups. By utilizing two hypotheses which was "Group Members Who Engage in Status Self-Enhancement Will Be Less Accepted by Other Members Than Those Who Perceive Their Status Accurately" and the second " how Face-to-Face Group Members Will Perceive Their Own Status Accurately" (Anderson et al, 2006). positive illusions theory, states that people would not want to engage in status-self enhancement for risk of being socially excluded from groups. The researchers used collaborative group work and informal exercises as a way of collecting data. A longitudinal study, conducted in two parts. Fundamentally, positive illusions

theory asserts that people create overly positive perceptions of their status in face-to-face groups, at the same time, individuals' perceptions of their status are highly accurate if they closely match the group's perception of their status because creating unduly positive status self-perceptions can hurt people's acceptance in a group. Consequently, it also claims that people are likely to hold back from status self-enhancement to keep their belongingness in a group. Their findings are supported by 2 studies of status in face-to-face groups, using a "social relations model" approach (Anderson et al, 2006). Moreover, the positive illusion theory conclude that people can portray an over hyped image of themselves, to highlight the best version of themselves, yet emphasize that in different contexts like groups, people tend to reduce the exaggerated version of themselves because of the harsh social consequences a person might endure by exaggerating his or her status. A person who showed high accuracy in perceiving their status and even erred on the side of being overly humbled, for the purpose of self-enhancement in status self-perceptions was associated with lower levels of social acceptance. Hence, showing that people do present an exaggerated self-perception that's influenced according to whether their interacting in a group or personal context (Anderson et al, 2006). Another study we looked over as a preparation for this paper, was study called entitled "Homogeneity perception as a reaction to identity threat: Effects of status difference in a simulated society game" conducted by Minoru Karasawa, Kaori Karasawa, and Yukio Hirose, postulates that issues of social class and status do have an effect on people's perceptions of themselves and influences the way people interact with one another. The authors state, "Yet, the present results, along with findings from other studies, have shown that members of underprivileged groups may seek positive social identity in subtle manners rather than merely pursuing group superiority" (Karasawa et al, 2004, p. 622). In the simulated game, members of the low status group were aware that they had fewer resources; acknowledging this

fact they did not seek to become the superiors in the game. Although, the results came from a simulated game, they can be generalized to pertain to real life. People from lower status groups seek positive in-group identities while recognizing their inferiority. Their perception or awareness of their social status affected the way interacted with others in the game. We want to focus more on how social class, race, and gender affect college students perception.

RQ1:How do socioeconomic factors such as race and class, affect college students' self-perceptions at SUNY Oswego?

Methods

Participants

This study was designed as an inductive study. Research from an outside source was used to help create the questions that would guide our research. Four participants were recruited through volunteer sampling methods on the SUNY Oswego Campus. Participants were chosen based on preferences decided individually by each interviewer. We were looking for students who attended SUNY Oswego in their early 20's to help us collect our data.. We were able to interview four interviewees, where three of the interviewees were women, and one interviewee was a man. Every participant was in their early 20's and did attend SUNY Oswego, but we do see a variation in the students University classifications (Fr. So. Jr. Sr. etc). We only utilized three of the participants responses to generate the information presented in this project. The Purpose being that we wanted to illustrate the impacts socioeconomic, status, and race affected college students perception and to find themes within the given responses.

Procedures

After securing IRB approval for this project, we were able to begin our research. The IRB approval process consisted of approval of questions and research. We were asked to create a list of questions that would be used to guide our research. These questions had to be submitted to the IRB to check for an ethical issues that might occur during the collection of data. Once we were cleared by the IRB we began to prepare to collect our research. The first step we took to collect some research was to obtain volunteer participants who would engage in a 1on 1 interview that contained at least 10 questions and last more than 10 minutes. We used non random sampling techniques which included voluntary sampling and purposive sampling. Participants were chosen based upon the interviewers personal preferences, as long as the participant was a student enrolled at SUNY Oswego. Before we began our interviews, all participants were debriefed on the content of the questions and consented to have their voice recorded. All participants were asked the same ten questions, with an additional four follow up questions if needed. Although, we conducted four interviews, we were only able to transcribe three, due to time limitations. All interviews were conducted separately, and there was only one researcher and one participant present at the time all questions were asked. After collecting and recording all of the data, each researcher transcribed their interview. Upon the completion of all 3 transcripts, we came together to review the information from the interviews and discovered some commonalities. We decided it would be best to leave the research open and then come up with themes and commonalities after reviewing all of the findings.

Analysis

The findings from this study will be discussed and analyzed thematically. We conducted a meeting where we analyzed and read through all of the transcripts from the interviews we conducted. While reading and reviewing each transcript out loud, we highlighted common

fragments, ideas, and beliefs that we thought were important or related to one another from the answers we received from the participants. Responses were defined as important if we saw that another participant had said something similar, and if we thought there was a theme present within their feedback. A thematic analysis is appropriate because after coming together to review the data, we noticed many similarities among the participants answers; similarities with regard to both terminology and context. There was repetition, and recurrence of similar ideas in all three transcriptions. The questions we found themes in were questions number, three, four, five, six, and seven. After concluding that there were similarities to way participants responded to these five questions, we wrote down what the themes were exactly. The themes we came up with were financial factors, respect, and the importance of social classes.

Findings

Our qualitative findings are a reflection of student participants opinions regarding race, socio-economic status, and gender. Students were asked a series of questions that revolved around their perceptions within their college environment. A total of 4 volunteer participants were recorded during each individual 1 on 1 interview. The information obtained was directly related to our research question; How do socioeconomic factors such as race and class, affect college students' self-perceptions at SUNY Oswego? Students responses were recorded, transcribed, then compared the data for further analysis in search of current themes and ideas that may be commonly shared among all 3 participants.

After conducting our research, we discovered that our participants shared a lot of the same perceptions about themselves and their environment. We find that our participants responses gathered from the questionnaire, have thematic similarities. We recognized the first

theme after noticing similarities among our participants answers, when we posed question number 3, “ what factors influenced your decision to attend SUNY Oswego?” From our Questionnaire, all their answers eluded that they made their decisions based on financial factors.

The first participant (Emma) stated,

For sure, um yeah I got into all of my colleges that I applied to which was really awesome. But, my dream school was out of state and **I couldn't afford the out of state tuition**, I would have loved to be in Colorado studying um the same thing. But I, I think the value came from being in a SUNY and the opportunity to have the **Excelsior Scholarship** is really what drew me to go to a **CUNY or SUNY**. Um and I knew I didn't want to stay home in the city (laughs) so that's...

The second participant (Doris) mentioned,

Um I decided to attend SUNY Oswego more so because I was given a good financial aid, um I was given a **good financial aid** where um **I have to pay less while attending SUNY Oswego, compared to like other schools** so that's why I came here, um and I guess I heard it was a good school up here so I'm like okay why not, um, I didn't want to get involved with like taking out too many loans knowing the background I came referencing into the question I was asked earlier about my socioeconomic status so yea, you know I wanted to get a college – **a good college education with a cheaper price**.

The third participant (Lore) mentioned,

I would say **because it was cheap. It also was far away** – but not too far away from home to where it's too much of a risk to take. And then also I knew Emmanuel Cruz from, he's the Director of like recruiting and a former Alumni of

my high school. Knowing him and being able to get like certain things clarified like being able to get a job on campus et cetera that really helped me to build confidence and want to take that risk.

Each participant responded that they attended SUNY Oswego because it was cheaper or more affordable than the other options that they had available. Students admitted that financial factors were not their main reason for attending the University. Some participants had already heard good things about the school before deciding to attend. Most of them identified themselves as members of the Middle class.

Another theme we discovered revolves around the perception of Respect. When posed “how much of a difference is there in the way you speak to someone with a higher status vs someone who holds the same status as you or less than you? If there is a difference, explain why or why not?”

The first participant (Emma) stated;

Um, well I mean like **I was raised to have respect for you know, people that are older than me or people that are um (laughs), yeah people that are older than me**, I really hate the feeling, I really hate that kind of, (stuttering) I guess the revering of rich people, like I really can't stand that. Just because, like you can reveal someone's work, you can be like super impressed by how something that they've accomplished but if it's just the fact that they have a lot of money, and that's what impresses you, that's not something that I find, um, that you should influence how you behave around them, um...

The second participant (Doris) stated;

Okay um to answer this question I feel I would be a hypocrite if I say that I don't speak to people in different societies differently, for example let's say if I'm speaking not that I'm saying that I speak to poor people or people in lower socioeconomic status differently or in a way that belittles them because I'm not going to speak to Oprah Winfrey in the same way I would speak to a janitor in a school because if I'm speaking to Oprah Winfrey **I'm going to speak to her with respect** knowing that um you never know she could be the next opportunity that I have or something like that you know, you basically you branding yourself because you want to be closer to the next to the big thing but the way I speak to a janitor I wouldn't say I speak to them um belittled them but I wouldn't have the same you know I guess verbal communication I would have with Oprah because to me a janitor is like a regular person but if its Oprah, it's like wow she's a billionaire and I'm going to talk to her with **respect** I'm going to have to brand myself to actually get to the next level

The third participant (Loro) stated;

I would say me personally for myself **I was raised to treat everybody with respect. Whoever gives you respect you give it back.** Um like. Whether it's a CEO or a janitor. I say thank you in the same manner, things of that nature. I can say that based on my personal experience that I definitely notice a switch up with people where maybe um because you have money or maybe because you have a certain title or position they feel as if because you can do something for them or to them that they have to act a certain way.

Within this theme, we find that our participants respond to this question based upon their own individual experiences and lives. They all share the common belief that they do occasionally speak to people differently based on the person's social class. They agreed that the only time that they did change how they treated and or spoke to someone differently depended mostly on the context of the interaction. For example, you might speak to a celebrity differently then you might speak to a random stranger on the street. There was also common responses regarding the way they were brought up as children. They remember lessons about manners and respect that their families taught them that they still hold strong beliefs in today. They all agree that you treat people how you want to be treated.

Our third recurring theme was the importance of social classes. When asked? Emma said, "You need those people to work those lower end jobs because not everyone can be a venture capitalist, not everyone can be a politician, with you know with a lot of money." Doris stated, poor people are important in society since they're the ones who actually work the "lower" jobs. She also says that immigrants are the ones that are always working the construction jobs that actually build the houses and skyscrapers where rich people live, Manhattan and the fact that it was built by the hands of poor Immigrants is significant because it is what the New York City is known for. Lore also made similar remarks saying, "Um I would say with poor people there are power in numbers. So it's like at the end of the day um if you look at like Amazon or something like that uh. Jeff Bezos is not personally packaging stuff for his customers. He still needs his workers, he still needs his people all that other stuff so with poor people there's more so a power in numbers sort of structure." All participants made reference to the idea that all social classes play a significant role in American society. In essence society would not function properly without the work that both the rich and the poor do; there is value in all professions.

Some of the strengths of our research was that it was qualitative. This allowed us to ask follow up questions during our interviews that enabled both the interviewer and the participants to elaborate more on the subject matter, providing us with richer data. Another strength was the discovery of themes within the data. Some of the weaknesses of our research was the lack of gender diversity. All participants were female, with the exception of one. Furthermore, due to time limitations, we were not able to transcribe all of our interviews, and the interview that we did not get to transcribe was that of the male participant. Our sample size was relatively small as we were only able to interview four SUNY Oswego students. Despite there being recurring themes among all participants, the lack of gender diversity and number of participants does not allow us to generalize our findings to the population of SUNY Oswego students, over the age of 18.

Conclusion

The topic on how social class affect people's perception have been studied extensively, offering different perspectives regarding social class, to understand the impact it can have on our perception and how we identify ourselves. In our project we wanted to comprehend the effects social class has on college student's perception, and conducted a qualitative study to expand our knowledge on the subject matter. As a result, we found that there were similarities throughout the data we collected, asserting that certain social class concepts influenced how individuals who participated in this study responded to some questions, revealing that social class can Impact our self-perception and how we identify ourselves.

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Questions

1. When I transcribe and share findings from this interview in the final course paper, do you have a pseudonym you'd like me to use to refer to your responses?
(If you don't, I'll assign your interview a number and use that number to refer to your interview)
2. With respect to gender how do you identify yourself and what is your age?
3. What is your race/socioeconomic background and how often do you think about your racial and economic status? Explain why?
4. What factors influenced your decision to attend SUNY Oswego?

[Potential follow up questions that we may ask depending on response: Were economics a factor in your decision? Were academic rankings a factor in your decision? Were social activities or opportunities a factor in your decision? Were athletics a factor in your decision?]

5. What value do you believe wealth holds in society and to what degree do you think wealthy people influence societal norms, and behavior?

6. What makes poor people important in a society? How much do you think poor people influence societal norms, and behavior? Explain why?
7. How much of a difference there is in the way you speak to someone with a higher status vs someone who holds the same status as you or less than you? If yes, explain why or why not?
8. How do you decide who should be in your inner circle?

[Follow-up question(s) if needed: Do you decide by status, class, race or gender?]

9. What status do you think you hold in your inner circle that makes you unique to them? How significant do you think your status plays into how your inner circle views you? Explain your response in-depth?
10. Are you involved in any extracurricular activities on or off-campus? If so, what appealed to you about those particular activities? Do you engage in any of these activities to escape reality?
11. Do you live on or off-campus?
12. If you live on campus, what affected your decision in choosing which dorm hall to live in?
13. If you do not live on campus, why did you choose to move off-campus?
14. What are you studying, and what factors influenced your decision to study that particular major?

Appendix B: HSCApproval Letter

Appendix C: Transcripts

Transcript 1

Researcher: Kiana

Kiana: Okay so the first question, um, when I transcribe and share findings from this interview in the final course paper, do you have a pseudonym you'd like me to use to refer to your responses?

Emma: Just Emma

Kiana: Just Emma, or would you prefer a number?

Emma: Um, no that's fine

Kiana: Emma, okay. With respect to gender how do you identify yourself and what is your age?

Emma: Uh, I identify as female, and my age is...I'm 20 years old (scoffs or laughs a little)

Kiana:(laughs) Okay, What is your race/socioeconomic background and how often do you think about your racial and economic status?

Emma: Uh, I am white and Latina and I'm middle class I would say, uh lower middle class (laughs). Uh, I mean it, I only think about it when it, you know when I'm thinking about my own debt, you know, coming out of college, like you know, its kind of, just like everyone else. Um if I was rich I wouldn't think about it as much, or if I was lower I wouldn't be here in the first place. So I guess knowing that you know I'm lucky enough to be in a place where I could take out those loans and you know and pay it off like everyone else, that's when I think about that.

Kiana: Um, and what factors influenced your decision to attend SUNY Oswego?

Emma: Um I do really value education, I enjoy learning, and I enjoy being a student. Um, not a lot of people here feel that way (laughs) but you know I do, um and I actually am going for something that I am super passionate about. I've been, I'm going for broadcasting and cinema, and so I've been doing that since highschool and its something that I really wanted to learn and perfect and craft so that's kind of one of the reasons, main reason that I'm here.

Kiana: Um and along with major reasons, are there any economic factors that affected your decision, or like academic rankings, social activities and opportunities and athletics that affected your decision?

Emma: For sure, um yeah I got into all of my colleges that I applied to which was really awesome. But, my dream school was out of state and I couldn't afford the out of state tuition, I would have loved to be in Colorado studying um the same thing. But I, I think the value came from being in a SUNY and the opportunity to have the Excelsior Scholarship is really what drew me to go to a CUNY or SUNY. Um and I knew I didn't want to stay home in the city (laughs) so that's...

Kiana: I feel you, (laughs) okay, what value do you believe wealth holds in society and to what degree do you think wealthy people influence societal norms, and behavior?

Emma: Um (laughs) I mean all of it, they influence most of it, uh that's at least what I believe. Uh I mean popular culture, What do you mean by culture? Just like...

Kiana: Well like societal norms or like behaviors, the standards.

Emma: Um well I feel like we all aspire to... even when we don't have money we'd like to act like we're rich. You know like we go to fancy restaurants on special occasions because we want to live lavishly, we want to buy nice clothes when we have the means to even though we maybe should probably put that money away towards other things. You know, we all do these things that, you know if you were wealthy you would do (pauses) on a normal, on a regular basis, we do it when we can. Like I do what I want, you do what you can kind of thing. Um and so that's really what influences decisions, you know if you, usually like finer things are something that people with not a lot of money really really value and so that kind of influences decisions that people make, and like financial decisions you know like. Yeah.

Kiana: And like how we live in a capitalist society,

Emma: Oh yeah, so much value

Kiana: Everybody no matter what your status is, is always seeking like profit or more money

Emma: Yeah, so like higher end for me would be like (laughs) buying Express when it first comes out, you know but for somebody else it would be going to the Gucci store, which I'm like, its alot (laughs)

Kiana: And what makes poor people important in a society? How much do you think poor people influence societal norms, and behavior?

Emma: Um, I think they don't necessarily influence, but they recieve. So they, they really like to take in all like the, the, (pauses) hold on, can you repeat the question?

Kiana: Yeah, um, so I'll break it up, so what makes poor people important in a society?

Emma: So, I mean in a society you need to have all sides, um you need to have like a top or bottom. Well I mean communism, well atleast in a capitalist society, in a democratic society its bound to happen. You know we form these classes and even in a communist society, where or socialist rather, where everyone's "equal" there are still people that make more and have more power than others, um but I think that having people on the bottom kind of sets the balance, so that you know you should be, like you you have to create public works and things like that, to.. In a functioning society you have to have non-profit organizations that help people, you know there is a kind of a balance of yin and yang. You need those people to work those lower end jobs because not everyone can be a venture capitalist, not everyone can be a politician, with you know with a lot of money.

Kiana: I think that's a major thing too like, I feel like a lot of kids are going to college now and because the like, um the price of college is increasing, a lot of kids are looking to go into these professions, whether that be like, that make a lot more money, whether that be a doctor, lawyer, or an economist. But trade jobs like our society wouldn't work without those either, everybody...

Emma: Absolutely, yeah and now like electricians make just as much as a (laughs) a freaking doctor, because no one wants to be a plumber, no one wants to be an electrician, no one wants to be these things but we've put such an emphasis on college that not enough people are taking those trades, therefore increasing the value of the trades, and decreasing the value of what these freaking degrees that cost so much.

Kiana: Yeah, um, and how much do you think poor people influence societal norms, and behavior?

Emma: I think they influence pop culture, and it's kind of like a, like a supply and demand. Like we, we want uh, I don't know, like there's always gonna be those people that are followers that want to see, you know that they glamorize the rich, and they glamorize the famous and those kind of people, I feel like everyone, like that's the main role of of the lower class is just to I don't know just to have those blue collar jobs to be, to be functioning, I don't know how to describe it, (laughs) I'm trying to think, uh, I guess just having the, the comfortability to not live in, you know, not everyone can live in a mansion, because that's just not the space that's happening, there have to be people that live in apartments, there have to be people that are cool with that.

Kiana: Um, how much of a difference is there in the way you speak to someone with a higher status vs someone who holds the same status as you or less than you? If there is a difference, explain why or why not?

Emma: Like economic status or what kind of status?

Kiana: Yeah like status, whether that be like wealth or age, or...

Emma: Um, well I mean like I was raised to have respect for you know, people that are older than me or people that are um (laughs), yeah people that are older than me, I really hate the feeling, I really hate that kind of, (stuttering) I guess the revering of rich people, like I really can't stand that. Just because, like you can reveal someone's work, you can be like super impressed by how something that they've accomplished but if it's just the fact that they have a lot of money, and that's what impresses you, that's not something that I find, um, that you should influence how you behave around them, um, like even in my own family, like my father loves to network, and he'll end up in situations where he's surrounded by like you know millionaires, or people that you know have a lot of money, or they have a lot of real estate, or things like that. You know people, and like when he speaks about these people it's just like an enamoration, and I can't, personally, I just can't stand that, because I'm like why are you so envious of them. You know you definitely have more, you know family life that's enriching, you know, like they definitely spent their whole lives working on their careers and not on their families. You know that's why they're all divorced and whatever it is (laughs), but you still have you know a family and it's really just an emphasis on what you find important. I don't really find money that important, um, you know, it's like a necessary evil, but to other people, it's more of like a, uh, uh, an end goal. So...

Kiana: So you would say that you communicate with people regardless of their status...all the same

Emma: Yeah, that's what I'm saying, I keep it pretty even and um just because I think that your, if you feel a need to speak up to somebody that is wealthy, you should ask yourself why like (laughs). Outside of their money, what is it that you find so impressive.

Kiana: Um, and how do you decide who should be in your inner circle?

Emma: Um, I really find intelligence to be a big key, people that are funny tend to be very very smart. And people that are witty tend to be very very smart, and I like hanging out with people that I can have conversations with, um of just any kind, whether that be just stupid surface-level jokes but down to you know deep conversations and politics and you know everything, gender equality, all those things that I find important, those are the things that, if I can hold that conversation with you and that you say something interesting and it's kind of like a mutual (laughs) a mutual existence, I guess, if I don't feel like I have to explain too many things to you (laughs), I feel like that's how I choose people to be in my inner circle.

Kiana: So, it's more of like a personality thing, do you ever take into account like a persons like status, or like their gender, or race or anything into account?

Emma: Um, I feel like I do have a lot more guy friends, um, which is kind of funny, I find it hard to find, have as many women in my inner circle, just because a lot of women uh, this is a generality, but a lot of women do tend to think with that group mentality, and they don't think for themselves. And I've noticed that in a lot of women, especially people that are like more self-conscious or insecure, um like I feel that the people who are around me are very comfortable with themselves, and I like , I hope to be that kind of way myself, you know I think of myself that way, That I am very comfortable with who I am. I don't do well around insecure people, because then you have to instantly reassure them and that's just not fun in a friendship, economic stand, you know I have friends that are way better off than I am, friends that are just about the same, or maybe that I'm doing better off than, you know people come to my house and they're like oh you live in a house and I go to their apartment and they're like oh you know their apartment is so cool, but they think my house is so cool. You know its a difference in, you know those differences don't really matter unless you make them matter and so if they're making a point to let you know where their economic standpoint is, they're probably ot in my inner circle (laughs).

Kiana: Yeah, um and what status do you think you hold in your inner circle that makes you unique to them?

Emma: Um, I think I am a natural leader, so I'm always the one that's like okay let's do these things, I'm very impulsive and very like, you know, I like to go out and do things, and make plans, and have fun. And I feel like that is my role in my friend group, the one that just do things because it's fun. Which is you know you have the good stories and bad stories from those things. (laughs) Um my friends know me as just like, mmm, yeah I haven't really thought of that, but I'm more of the impulsive one that, I try to be super supportive with, and try to be like the confident booster in everyone. That's what I try to be.

Kiana: Um, How significant do you think your status plays into how your inner circle views you?

Emma: Um very little, uh I think because, I mean I grew up I grew up like not, I always had a job growing up, so like, and my friends were all pretty much in the same, the same way, so you know, even at fourteen when we just entered high school, where I really met my best friends. I had an internship, they had jobs, you like, we all kind of had our own thing. I had that friend that got the car first, you know because their parents could afford it, or their parents got a new one. Um, I just got a car 5, 6, oh my god (laughs) 7 years later (laughs) you know and that's really

just from me saving up for the last, you know, a year and a half, whatever it was, you know I had friends in highschool that were able to get cars immediately, and that was, that was kind of the indicator that they were doing better than I was, but it was never (pauses) like something that, like we cared about too much or I guess, does that answer the question? (Laughs)

Kiana: Yeah, yeah, yeah (laughs), and there's no like specific answer, just like how you interpret the question, and like what you want to say. Um, so the next question is, are you involved in any extracurricular activities on or off-campus? Um and if so, what appealed to you about those particular activities? Do you engage in any of these activities to escape reality?

Emma: Uh yeah, yeah I work at the gyms at SUNY Oswego, so I teach kickboxing classes, um twice a week, I also do a lot of like, out of school like cinema projects and that kind of stuff, um yeah, what else do I do. I feel like I do more things but I don't, I don't know. I bartend, (laughs) as an activity (laughs)

Kiana: (laughs) that's an off campus

Emma: That's, that's not an extracurricular activity (laughs)

Kiana: Um and what appealed to you about these particular activities?

Emma: Oh and I do photography, that's my big (laughs) um well I love working out, I love being physically and mentally healthy and when I was able to teach in the gyms I took that opportunity and I loved it so much.

Kiana: Um and do you engage in any of these activities to escape reality?

Emma: Oh absolutely, yeah, um, I mean I'm a cinema major so all we do is write fake stories to make us feel better (laughs) that's really what movies are, right, reflections or just extensions, fantasies of what we wish life was. Um, and, (breathes), kickboxing is kind of a mental release, because where else do you get to have that kind of mental controlled I guess aggression, um, there's not many other things that are physically as, I mean its fight training, its not, you know, you're not just lifting weights. Your, your, fighting someone and it's like, I don't think I would ever be put in that kind of life or death situation but you know god forbid you that's the kind of fight training I do twice a week in a gym you know, like its not, its different than simply doing calisthenics or weightlifting.

Kiana: Um do you live on or off campus?

Emma: I live off-campus

Kiana: And if you do not live on campus, which you do not, um why did you choose to move off-campus?

Emma: Um I choose to move off campus because it was cheaper, saved me some money, um, and because I kind of grew tired of the dorm rules, I got tired of heating that freaking food, (breathes) it was so bad. The (laughs) the dining hall food, I got tired of it, but I wanted to be a little more independent.

Kiana: Um and you kind of already touch up (stutters) upon this, but what are you studying, and what factors influenced your decision to study that particular major?

Emma: Um so I'm a double major in Cinema Screen studies and Broadcast Communications, um, I chose cinema, I knew I always loved cinema, um from when I was really young, I went to high school for it. So thirteen I auditioned for something and it turned into a whole interest in film, and um I added broadcasting because at an internship I had, uh, one of my mentors there said hey I went to Oswego, you should definitely double majoring in broadcasting and it works really well with that and it opens more doors to have communication and broadcasting, television, as opposed to regular cinema which is a little limiting. Um so I chose those two together kind of broaden my general film knowledge ability.

Kiana: Okay, well that was the last question, thank you!

Transcript 2

Researcher: Titan

Titan: Okay, let's do this. What's your name?

Doris: My name is Doris [last name redacted]

Titan: Thank you. Thank you Doris. Uh, yeah. But um, so pretty much I'm about to ask you uh a series of questions um about a project that I'm doing um. So the first question I would ask you would be um, do you have, do you have um a nickname you want to uh be mentioned by?

Doris: No i'm just Doris

Titan: Um, cool. Question number two. With respect to gender and how, with respect to gender how do you identify yourself and what is your age?

Doris: Um, with respect to gender I would say I m a heterosexual woman, and um 21 years old

Titan: Okay. That's all.

Doris: Yes.

Titan: Okay. What is your race –

Doris: Um

Titan: Slash socioeconomic background and how often do you think about your racial and economic status? Explain why?

Doris: Okay so um I am a person that's within um the um black race, with my social economic background my family and I are in-part of the middle class, and um how I feel about my socioeconomic and racial status is that I feel like as black person, as black woman um coming from the middle class it's really hard to um be able to um expand myself into the I guess like the higher class so the rich status and it's even more hard knowing that you're from um black and being a woman and just knowing that just being a woman alone we are um often you know belittled into um getting paid last than man so I feel like that would make hard for me um being black and a woman to be able to climb up the socioeconomic ladder

Titan: So your gender and your race plays a ah impact in terms of how you see yourself and in this community? In the western community basically?

Doris: Yes

Titan: Okay. Um. What factors influenced your decision to attend SUNY Oswego?

Doris: Um I decided to attend SUNY Oswego more so because I was given a good financial aid, um I was given a good financial aid where um I have to pay less while attending SUNY Oswego, compared to like other schools so that's why I came here, um and I guess I heard it was a good school up here so I'm like okay why not, um, I didn't want to get involved with like taking out too many loans knowing the background I came referencing into the question I was asked earlier about my socioeconomic status so yea, you know I wanted to get a college – a good college education with a cheaper price

Titan: What value do you believe wealth holds in society and to what degree do you think wealthy people influence societal norms, and behavior?

Doris: Um I believe that wealth um holds a lot of weight in society, um, a lot of people think that money is not everything but the reality of it is that money is everything if you think about because without money I wouldn't be here for this interview, without money I wouldn't be attending college, I wouldn't have been you know having a shelter a shelter I wouldn't be renting, and things of that nature so honestly wealth is everything, um and that goes in reference to the question um I think that wealthy people influence the world to like the highest degree because once you have money you can really do anything you can start a business, you can even be the president of the united states with money so money holds a lot of weight so if you have money you can do anything.

Titan: How about behavior?

Doris: Um when it comes to behavior, what do you mean?

Titan: Like, I mean like, you know, certain things are allowed if like rich people uh like make it popular. Okay, okay, let's say um clothing – designing clothing, stuff like that, for like rappers, wearing Gucci and stuff like that, and a person who's in the middle class would want to wear Gucci just because a rich person has it or something like that so do - those kind of behaviors we're talking about.

Doris: Okay. I do, um, understand where you're coming from. Um. I think that um rich people do influence behavior a lot for example I guess like celebrities or like popular designer, like Dolce and Gabbana a lot of people are easily influenced into buying designer clothes spending money even if they don't have it because they're triggered and influenced by just knowing that I'm buying this rich person's brand or work so I feel like that's one way their influence people in society

Titan: What makes poor people important in a society? How much do you think poor people influence societal norms, and behavior? Explain why?

Doris: Um what makes poor people important in society there the ones who actually work the bullshit jobs that need the work done, for example I would say like immigrants they're the ones that are always working the construction jobs that actually build these houses that rich people live in or like the skyscrapers or like Manhattan is like really built off of immigrants or like poor people so they play an important role in working jobs that rich people or other people don't want to work like the janitors in schools they matter, the taxi drivers we need people like that to get from places to places, so that's why poor people are important because they do the jobs no one wants to do, and it actually makes the world revolve and go around because there have to be poor people. Also I think that poor people influence societal norms in way hm I'm not really sure

how to answer that question but I think that they influence it in a way that um it allows people to be motivated and to hustle because nobody wants to be poor, for example um whenever I'm on public transportation and I see a homeless person sleeping in a train or a bus I look at them and it really motivates me to not want to be in their position and not want to be poor like to the point in life where I have to sleep on a train to get through life, that's how I feel like they influence societal norms and it makes people look at them differently and when it comes to influencing behavior I feel like people in society look down on poor people like they don't matter, yeah

Titan: Okay. Um. How much of a difference there is in the way you speak to someone with a higher status vs someone who holds the same status as you or less than you? If yes, explain why or why not?

Doris: Okay um to answer this question I feel I would be a hypocrite if I say that I don't speak to people in different societies differently, for example let's say if I'm speaking not that I'm saying that I speak to poor people or people in lower socioeconomic status differently or in a way that belittles them because I'm not going to speak to Oprah Winfrey in the same way I would speak to a janitor in a school because if I'm speaking to Oprah Winfrey I'm going to speak to her with respect knowing that um you never know she could be the next opportunity that I have or something like that you know, you basically you branding yourself because you want to be closer to the next to the big thing but the way I speak to a janitor I wouldn't say I speak to them um belittled them but I wouldn't have the same you know I guess verbal communication I would have with Oprah because to me a janitor is like a regular person but if it's Oprah, it's like wow she's a billionaire and I'm going to talk to her with respect I'm going to have to brand myself to actually get to the next level

Titan: How do you decide who should be in your inner circle?

Doris: I decide who should be in my inner circle by determining like who brings what to the table or who actually bring something that might enhance my life or bring me to the next level, um one thing about me I don't like distraction so if I feel like there somebody that's in my inner circle that's not on the same timing or motivation as me, like they won't be in my inner circle at all because just like we were talking about society and um influencing behavior, I feel like if I have someone in my inner circle that's not motivated, driven, or doesn't have the same persona that I have their going to influence me to not be motivated, so that's how I determine by like their drive, their characteristics and everything, don't get me wrong I'm not saying it's all about being motivated because some people can't or are not like motivated but you just have to be driven to a certain extent because you know what they say, the people who you keep around you is a reflection of you in some type of way whether is a good way or bad way

Titan: That's a fact. What status do you think you hold in your inner circle that makes you unique to them? How significant do you think your status plays into how your inner circle views you? Explain your response in-depth?

Doris: Okay so the status I hold in my inner circle, I would say um the person that's always um I guess like pushing people out of the comfort zones or like pushing people to actually be driven I would say, and I feel like that's what makes me unique to them because you always have to have that one person in your circle that's, that can actually you know motivate you to do stuff you know, just like people have people in their inner circle they have fun with I feel like I'm the one that like I can have fun but I'm more of like you motivating people not letting them be dumb to their fullest potential. And, is that, "explain your inner circle," um. Honestly how my status in my inner circle views me I would say even though this is not really a good thing I would say some people might be intimidated by like knowing that I'm like a person that wants people to

driven and motivated because some people are not on the same type of timing or don't have the same type of vision as you so sometimes it might come out as in a way that you're trying to be intimidating but it's not really what is it so yeah and uh yeah!

Titan: Tell me. This is the last question. We're about to finish this report, complete this. Are you involved in any extracurricular activities on or off-campus? If so, what appealed to you about those particular activities? Do you engage in any of these activities to escape reality?

Doris: Okay so I used to be part of the African students organization as a director of correspondence and what I basically do is I am a liaison between the org and um the outside community, I'm currently a senior advisor to the African students organization since I'm not in like part of the Org anymore, I'm also part of currently a secretary for the nation association of black people, NAACP it basically promote you know black history black culture and things of that nature, and recently I also get into ESG and that's an honor society for my health and wellness management major which I will be inducted into Sunday I believe. That's something I'm part of for right now and um yeah

Titan: What um, what motivated you to um be involved in these kind of extra extracurricular activities?

Doris: I joined ASO because I wanted to spread my culture in a way that people would be able to see it from a different light, because I feel like people have this misconception of what Africa is and so joining ASO has allowed me to actually like voice what Africa is about. Also joined ASCP, NAACP, it's similar to ASO but it's basically about you know like black history so I'm in touch with like just learning about like my black history while promoting it and um yeah that's about it and um yeah that's why I joined these orgs um I also joined them to keep myself busy and to not stay stagnant so I don't want to be going home after class I want to stay busy.

Titan: Word. [Indecipherable] and I mean it. Okay. We're done.

Transcript 3

Researcher: Tyquan Bethea

Interviewer: When I transcribe and share findings from this interview in the final course paper, do you have a pseudonym you'd like me to use to refer to your responses?

Interviewee: You can just call me Lore, L-O-R-E

Interviewer: With respect to gender how do you identify yourself and what is your age?

Interviewee: I identify as a woman and I am 21 years old.

Interviewer: What is your race, socioeconomic background and how often do you think about your racial and economic status? Explain why?

Interviewee: I would say that I am mixed races. I am black white and Jewish but predominantly I come from a black family. I would say that with race I get comfortable within my identity but I mainly advocate for black rights and the progression of black rights. When it comes down to like money, I would say it doesn't dominate my mind as much as like going to college and stuff like that because personally I have gotten different job positions and things of that nature and at the same time I've gotten to study capitalism more. With that type of knowledge I understand not to allow capitalism to influence my emotions and decisions, stuff of that nature. Um I would say

race, I think of it on a basis of how often racial interactions happen within American media and on top of that I am also an Afro American Studies minor so I guess I try to incorporate it into my creative nature and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Okay. What factors influenced your decision to attend SUNY Oswego?

Interviewee: I would say because it was cheap. It also was far away – but not too far away from home to where it's too much of a risk to take. And then also I knew Emmanuel Cruz from, he's the Director of like recruiting and a former Alumni of my high school. Knowing him and being able to get like certain things clarified like being able to get a job on campus et cetera that really helped me to build confidence and want to take that risk

Interviewer: Were academic rankings a factor in your decision?

Interviewee: Um I would say no, because I have always been a pretty good student since high school even with regents and just regular scores Um maybe SATs were a little shaky but outside that, outside of that I was pretty solid with like regular work

Interviewer: Were social activities or opportunities a factor in your decision?

Interviewee: Um Not really because I was more focused on trying to transition into adulthood. I played basketball and stuff like that in high school but once I got into college it was just focusing on adulthood. My focus was to get a job and focus on my books, try and get into a career, stuff like that.

Interviewer: What value do you believe wealth holds in society and to what degree do you think wealthy people influence societal norms, and behaviors?

Interviewee: I would say that when it comes to wealthy people, it's kind of more so on an individual scale. So um also with wealth it's a factor of how much value we put into it. There are

people that live in off grid societies where you could throw a hundred million dollars at them that will mean nothing for them because their society is not based on that so I would say that's a factor but in general I would just say that wealthy people definitely are big decision makers and people that like a Steve Jobs or something like that when something happens to them it's it's major so. They definitely have an impact on an individual scale because of the wealth they have.

Interviewer: What makes poor people important in a society?

Interviewee: Um I would say with poor people there are power in numbers. So it's like at the end of the day um if you look at like Amazon or something like that uh. Jeff Bezos is not personally packaging stuff for his customers. He still needs his workers, he still needs his people all that other stuff so with poor people there's more so a power in numbers sort of structure

Interviewer: Mmhm. How much do you think poor people influence social norms, and behaviors?

Interviewee: Um. I would say we definitely have the power to break the barriers of certain social norms and behaviors and I think we definitely see that throughout American history whether you see it for like poor or gay people or even foreigners. There has definitely been with each generation a change in around the rhetoric of how we speak of those marginalized people and things of that nature. And there is a conscious effort to try to like ~~and~~ include these people so yeah.

Interviewer: How much of a difference is there in the way you speak to someone with a higher status vs someone who holds the same status as you or less? explain why or why not?

Interviewee: I would say me personally for myself I was raised to treat everybody with respect. Whoever gives you respect you give it back. Um like. Whether it's a CEO or a janitor. I say

thank you in the same manner, things of that nature. I can say that based on my personal experience that I definitely notice a switch up with people where maybe um because you have money or maybe because you have a certain title or position they feel as if because you can do something for them or to them that they have to act a certain way. So like when I received a certain on campus, a certain coworker used to give me like tension and hostility but once I got that position they were open to having nicer conversations or casual conversations or ask like questions or something of that nature when prior to this position it was very hostile. I would definitely say this person changed their demeanor because they know that I know control their scheduling, which means I control their pay which means I control their hours, et cetera so it just like from that person with like, that that person's motives they decided to go in that route to like switch up their convictions or whatever.

Interviewer: Okay. How do you decide who should be in your inner circle?

Interviewee: Um I would say based on people give me, people how they like give or take I would say so it's like for me. I am all about fairness to a certain extent so let's say if I run to the library to pick up a book could you also like grab my mail, you know, A give and take. I also look at people with their goals, their motivations and what they're into so it's like I try to have people around me like that is either focused on working or focused on school focused on they dreams and career, things of that nature This also keeps me grounded and keeps me wanting and keeps me pushing further

Interviewer: Do you ever decide by using status, class, race or gender?

Interviewee: I would say that I am open to people but I am definitely weary of letting like white people into my inner circle just for like not necessarily personal experiences, that's just my own

personal preference and what I decide to do, but outside of that I am more so open to just talking to anybody

Interviewer: Is there any specific reason why?

Interviewee: For me, personally, it's more so like a boundary thing. If we're looking at like history and also I'm half white I feel like personally, myself, that's enough whiteness in my own personal life. No to say that you know I have never met a genuine great white person. I've had definitely had people that were teachers of mine that were um you know great but I just for me personally it's more so I don't know how to explain it on a micro-level but uh it's just more so historically speaking that I feel they have gotten enough of our time. 246 years of free labor and 400 years of just the overall slavery and it's just like you know what I just need to be separation just to see what life is like without yall.

Interviewer: What status do you think you hold in your inner circle that makes you unique to them? How significant do you think your status plays into how your inner circle views you? Explain your response in-depth?

Interviewee: I would say that because I have different connections like being that I am mixed race being of like a part of the LGBTQ community but also like being very Pro Black and apart of black activism, my friends view me as a person of convictions but I can also empathize with all people. At the same breath, I can stand my ground with certain things. I would say presenting myself in a certain way and carrying myself in a certain manner tends to attract people. I hope that answers the question.

Interviewer: Um I think it answers like one or two. . . How significant do you think your status plays into how your inner circle views you? Explain your response in-depth?

Interviewee: I guess I am funny and a very strong friend. A little crazy at times but I feel I can best be described as cultured.

Interviewer: Are you involved in any extracurricular activities on or off-campus? If so, what appealed to you about those particular activities? Do you engage in any of these activities to escape reality?

Interviewee: I would say that prior to my senior year that I had a lot more connections on campus. Between maintaining my current building manager position and writing for the Odyssey, an online blog, and also holding an eboard position for an organization ran by students in the past. Outside of those I have been searching for NFA programs and trying to put together manuscripts for my major and focusing on my capstone.

Interviewer: what appealed to you about those particular activities? Do you engage in any of these activities to escape reality?

Interviewee: I got involved and started writing for the Odyssey because it allowed me to write on a blog about whatever I wanted every week. It helps me with the writing for my major. These activities are my outlet and I won't say that they are there to help me escape reality. They just help me cope with reality.

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