

Socioeconomic & Class Identity

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Positionality

Each of our individual identities and experiences came together when learning more about socioeconomic and class identity within the context of social class and how it influences our drive to pursue higher education. We all discussed and acknowledged each other's differing backgrounds and how each of us still ended up at the same college despite our differences in social class and background. It is better to understand each other's identities and how we ended up in the same classroom, and it is important to acknowledge the role that social class plays in each individual's upbringing.

Research

The first article, "Who we are impacts how we lead: Social class influence on leader identity, capacity, and efficacy" by Ardoin & Guthrie (2021) was about who you are as a person and how your identity impacts how you lead. In the article it talked about western culture describing those of middle to upper socioeconomic classes and how they often have taken higher authority roles due to more confidence, assertiveness, leadership, and a higher performing self-efficiency because of their social class. "Conversely, individuals from poor and working-class backgrounds may be less likely to pursue 'traditional' positional leadership because they are not as comfortable with the actions they believe are required to attain positions of authority (Belmi & Laurin, 2016)." In summary, those who identify themselves as middle to upper class have the advantage when it comes to leadership characteristics because of the way the individual was raised. While those who did not have the ability to be brought up in a higher socioeconomic class had a harder time adjusting to leadership skills and authoritative behaviors.

The second article we considered for our class facilitation, "Understanding Social Class as Identity," explored social class as a critical feature of identity among college students.

An emphasis on social class and social class identity are highlighted in the article. The authors discuss how college campuses used to consist primarily of white, protestant, and upper class families with dominant social identities, and now campuses across the nation are more diverse than ever with the additions of students from historically minoritized racial or ethnic backgrounds (Martin, Williams and Young 9). In addition, the authors work towards defining “social class” as a term in regards to the college landscape. “Although the process of defining social class in a digestible and accessible manner can be challenging we opt for a definition that acknowledges the human dimensions inherent in one’s experience of social class” (Martin, Williams and Young 11). The article elaborates by discussing that individuals typically have three social-class related identities, which include: a social class origin, a current felt or perceived social class, and an attributed social class or put another way, how others perceive one’s social class.

The article we used for our presentation, “Family Social Class as a Predictor of College Students’ Career Decision-Making Self Efficacy” by Wang et al. was a great representation of how social class contributes to one’s pursuit of higher education when taking into consideration their future careers. This article conducted a study of 1,200 questionnaires to college students connecting their family’s socioeconomic status to their belief in a just world (BJW), self-esteem, and career decision making. After composing four hypotheses and calculation through data analysis, the results revealed that there was a significant positive correlation between each of the three variables. The study showed that parents typically have an influential role in how their children pursue and view the world, themselves, and their future career.

The overall take away from the article “How Social Class Identity Influences Leadership and Advocacy Development” by Williams Smith is that students' social class identity, wherever

they identify, has a tremendous effect on students' leadership development. Students who engage in activism, resistance are doing so as a leader whereas students who come from a more disadvantaged background develop skills around social class because they experience campus protocols and norms that assume students come from a privileged background. Students with a disadvantage want to make it easier for the next generation of students who come from disadvantages. (Williams, 75)

Discussion/Activity Reflection

Overall, we feel that the facilitation of our group discussion went well. We did our best to keep the class engaged while doing multiple activities as well as adding an interesting, applicable video to go along with our topic. We feel like our technology faults were a slight burden to getting our presentation started, but we also have to recognize that these were not necessarily within our scope of realm, we could not have predicted that this was going to be an issue. Facilitating discussion among the classroom is not always an easy task because it is early in the morning and most people are not fully awake enough to engage in in-depth conversations. However we do feel that the group gained some valuable knowledge about social class and how one is influenced by their parents. Our group learned how to communicate effectively as a team, divide tasks evenly amongst ourselves, and bounce ideas off of each other to enhance the learning process not only for ourselves but so we could teach the class as well.

We learned that there is great diversity within our class when it comes to socioeconomic and social class. When you look at a classroom of 20-30 students that attend a private liberal arts institution such as St. Norbert College, you might assume that many people may come from an upper class family however that was not the case. Based on the answers we received, we had a handful from the lower class, middle class and upper class. It was interesting to hear that

everyone had different backgrounds growing up and learning that it was a lot more normal for more parents or grandparents to not attend college or any higher education. When we assigned everyone into groups, we felt as if everyone was participating and engaging in the conversation and we felt like our groups were listening to each other and felt comfortable sharing their personal stories. One thing that could have gone better was the conversations as a whole about our questions, it didn't feel like we had as many responses as we might have hoped. However, our topic touches on personal issues so we can understand why some people may not have felt comfortable to respond to all of them. Overall, we believe that our discussion went extremely well, with multiple students participating and engaging in the activities, as well as the educational video which brought more understanding of how one's background affects their future.

General Takeaways

When presenting in front of peers, there is always that unnerving feeling of failure and rejection, but it is important to recognize that we are all in the same boat. We feel that this helps contribute to our social identities because we are now more accepting of others and understand what they may be feeling while presenting their topics. Because of this, we are going to be more willing to participate in other groups' class discussions and be even more understanding if they have any issues whilst presenting.

We learned that our socioeconomic and social class identity is very important to not only us as individuals but how other people may view us as well. We think our identities are much more complex than they used to be, especially now being college students living on our own. We never thought too deeply about our personal identities or even what the word identity really meant but now we understand that it can mean a multitude of things.

Our group came together after presenting and discussed how calm and comfortable we each felt speaking about our pasts and relating them to others in the class. We learned that one's social identity is very unique to an individual, and although we might share similar stories no person is raised within the same context or setting. Through our research, we can now identify the differences that come with one's social identity, and how that identity can have an impact on our lives as individuals and as a whole.

References

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