



2016

Self-Esteem and Critical Consciousness in the Relation between Subjective Social Class and Subjective Well-Being Among College Students: Mediation and Moderated Mediation Models

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

SELF-ESTEEM AND CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE RELATION BETWEEN
SUBJECTIVE SOCIAL CLASS AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING AMONG
COLLEGE STUDENTS:
MEDIATION AND MODERATED MEDIATION MODELS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

BY

FATMA AYDIN

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

DECEMBER 2016

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to express my deepest appreciation for my dissertation chair, Dr. Elizabeth Vera, and my committee members, Dr. Anita Thomas and Dr. Steven Brown. My gratitude for all of your distinct contributions to my dissertation and my overall development throughout the entire doctoral program is beyond words. Dr. Vera, I am truly thankful for you helping me develop a greater passion for and knowledge of social justice, which has fueled my research and practice. Dr. Thomas, you have instilled in me a strong dedication to incorporating critical consciousness and identity exploration into my professional work and personal life. Your support has been invaluable in helping me develop my own identity and areas of interest as a psychologist. Dr. Brown, you have been extremely instrumental in my growth as a researcher who can explore and generate knowledge and use it to enhance practice. I would also like to thank Dr. Rufus Gonzales, for you have greatly contributed to my clinical and professional development. I feel extremely honored and proud to become a counseling psychologist with the outstanding training I have received from a faculty of inspirational and pioneer counseling psychologists like you.

Second, I am extremely grateful for my wonderful, compassionate, enthusiastic, and resilient family, who lives in Istanbul, Turkey. We overcame many struggles together and it is for your greatest unconditional support, help, and motivation that I have been able to pursue my dreams, even though it has meant missing each other everyday. My

mother Hacer Bora – the strength and perseverance, strong sense of fairness and work ethic, and values of honesty and authenticity you have instilled in me are the sources of my accomplishments. My sister Hanife, I am forever indebted to you for your immense support of my education and endless guidance, love, and care. My brother Gürhan, I have always relied on your humor, wisdom, and reassurance to revive and move forward. My nieces Naz, Zeynep, and İpek, you enrich my life with your joyful presence, and it has been the reward of reuniting with you back home that has kept me going during times of difficulty. My parents-in-law Peg and Val, I cannot thank you enough for your support, encouragement, and trust, for they have been truly invaluable in helping me complete this project.

Finally, I give my deepest gratitude to my husband, Joseph Kranak. Thank you so much for believing in me, loving me, being here for me unconditionally, and helping me every step of the way. It is thanks to you I have learned how to be more self-compassionate and accepted the countless moments of challenge with courage while celebrating my accomplishments. Your intelligence and endless curiosity have been very inspiring and motivating. I could not have succeeded without your constant support, patience, validation, love, and care for me. I love you, and I am very excited to continue this journey of life with you!

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ABSTRACT

Subjective social class (SSC) and subjective well-being (SWB) are important indicators of mental health, and the scientific literature has indicated significant relationships between these variables. The purpose of this study is to examine the complex mechanisms by which SSC is related to SWB, using a sample of 275 college students. This study first explored whether SSC was indirectly related to SWB through the mediating effect of self-esteem. Three elements of SSC (economic resources, social power, and social prestige) and three elements of SWB (satisfaction with life, negative affect, and positive affect) were investigated. Using process analysis, the results showed that social power and social prestige had significant indirect effects on satisfaction with life and negative affect through self-esteem, supporting self-esteem's full to partial mediation of the relationships between some elements of SSC and SWB. This study also examined if the indirect effects of social power and social prestige on satisfaction with life and negative affect were moderated by critical consciousness by buffering the negative effects of low SSC on self-esteem. Conditional process analyses revealed no significant results. Additionally, in contrast to expectations, the findings may suggest an inverse moderating effect, such that high critical consciousness increased the size of the indirect effect of SSC on SWB. However, this result was not statistically significant but is only speculative. Implications for theory, and clinical practice in working with college students, limitations of the study, and directions for future research are discussed.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Social class is an essential cultural construct that helps us understand human development, biological health, mental health, and well-being (Liu et al., 2004a; American Psychological Association Task Force on Socioeconomic Status, 2007). Theorists have postulated that social class determines the experiences of individuals and how they perceive and experience the world (Phoenix & Tizard, 1996; Ostrove & Cole, 2003; Aries & Seider, 2007). It shapes the possibilities we encounter and the decisions we make (Massey, Gross, & Eggers, 1991); it provides us with opportunities and life chances (Phoenix & Tizard, 1996; Fine & Burns, 2003); and it affects “the development and expression of our knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, motives, traits, and symptoms” (Stewart & Ostrove, 1993, p. 476). Henri Tajfel’s Social Identity Theory suggests that the experience of belonging to a group and the emotional meaning of it are essential elements of self-concept (Tajfel, 1974). Thus, belonging to a social class group affects the development and the expression of one’s identity, which highlights the significance of its exploration in the field of psychology.

Social Class in Psychological Research

Despite the importance of social class on development, identity, and mental health, an examination of the psychological literature indicates a neglect of the study of social class. For the most part, psychologists have left the exploration of social class to

sociologists, and a substantial amount of our knowledge about social class comes from sociology literature (Ostrove & Cole, 2003). The report of the American Psychological Association's (APA) Task Force on Socioeconomic Status (TFSS; APA TFSS, 2007) indicated that the field of psychology lacks a "class consciousness," and this is reflected in research, practice, education, and policy. In their report, the APA TFSS (2007) called for researchers, practitioners, and educators to attend to how social class and socioeconomic position affect psychological processes and outcomes and their sociopolitical implications. The need for systematic research addressing the actual psychological and subjective meaning of social class and exploring the relationships between social class and various psychological variables, such as identity, attitudes, self-esteem, well-being, and discrimination, has been indicated by various scholars (Ostrove & Cole, 2003; Liu, Soleck, Hopps, Dunston, & Pickett, 2004b; APA TFSS, 2007). Another criticism regarding the study of social class concerns the existing research. It has been emphasized that social class has mostly been treated as a demographic variable in psychological research and defined as "socioeconomic status" (SES), which is measured by objective indicators, such as one's or one's parents' income, profession, and education, as opposed to being perceived as a psychological variable (Brown, Fukunaga, Umemoto, & Wicker, 1996; Liu et al., 2004a; Liu et al., 2004b). Ostrove and Cole (2003) suggested that the study of social class must go beyond conceptualizing class solely with a focus on looking at SES differences or treating class as a descriptor or a control variable in order to investigate class as a social identity.

Several accounts may shed light on our understanding of this lack of attention to social class in psychological research. First of all, American society still holds the

assumption that all individuals have equal access to opportunity and that if they cannot “make it,” the reason is their own lack of ability. Therefore, challenging this ideation often elicits “antagonistic reactions” (Hollingshead & Redlich, 1958) and prevents individuals from conceptualizing class from a more macro level and a sociopolitical understanding. Scientific disciplines do not exist in a vacuum and cannot be understood in isolation from the sociopolitical culture of the society from which they are produced. Therefore, in a society where the majority of people believe in upward mobility, it is not surprising that psychologists do not attend to the importance of class (Ostrove & Cole, 2003) and fail to expand their scope of multiculturalism, although they rigorously focus on the other social groupings that shape individuals’ self-concepts, such as gender, race or ethnicity, and sexual orientation (APA TFSS, 2007; Aries & Seider, 2007; Ostrove & Cole, 2003).

Overall, all these arguments highlight the need for systematic research that captures the actual psychological meaning of class and systematically explores the relationships between social class and various psychological variables (Ostrove & Cole, 2003; APA TFSS, 2007; Brown et al., 1996). Therefore, it is the aim of this project to fill this gap in the literature by examining the relationship between social class and essential psychological variables. By examining such relationships, this study hopes to increase our understanding about the processes of how social class might influence identity, psychological outcomes, and overall mental health. To that end, this study conceptualizes social class as an identity variable and from the Differential Status Identity framework (Fouad & Brown, 2000).

Social Class as a Psychological Construct

Differential Status Identity (DSI) is a theory proposed by Fouad and Brown (2000) as an integrative framework to understand and predict the social and psychological effects of group belonging, particularly related to race and social class, in the hierarchical structure of the society. The theory posits that individuals assess their social standing or social status in comparison to those of others in the ordinant group, the group comprised of the majority of the people in a society, which is the middle class in the US. It postulates that individuals' perceptions of those assessments in turn influence the development of their conceptions of their own social class status, as well as their behavior and overall psychological development (i.e. identity, self-esteem, and mental health).

According to Fouad and Brown (2000), individuals make these assessments based on three interrelated structural factors of social status: economic resources, social prestige, and social power (Rossides, 1990, 1997). Economic resources include factors such as income, education level, economic security, and control of others' resources. Social prestige emphasizes how much a person or group is esteemed or valued, and it includes factors such as perceived occupational prestige, social group participation, and consumption behavior. It suggests people from lower social classes have limited participation in social groups, experience various mental health problems, and have low prestige occupations, and it suggests people from the lower middle class have decent living standards with few material possessions, whereas people in the highest level of societal strata luxuriate in many material possessions, have high-prestige occupations, engage themselves in societal life, and possess relatively consistent positive self-identity

(Rossides, 1990, 1997; Thompson & Subich, 2007). Finally, social power includes perceived control of social values through legal and political institutions, sense of power to influence politics or legal systems, and access to government benefits. People who are at the lowest strata often do not engage in political activities, and they experience discrimination concerning their legal rights, whereas individuals who are at the top benefit from high involvement and influence in politics and great legal support for their rights, and they have access to various governmental benefits (Thompson & Subich, 2007).

DSI theory assumes that individuals can have different standings with regards to these structural factors, such that an individual can have low income but high prestige (e.g., a graduate student working towards a Ph.D. in economics with little income). Furthermore, it also acknowledges that people with comparable incomes may have different psychological experiences (e.g., a fisherman might feel less regarded in society than a teacher although their incomes might be the same). The type of conceptualization DSI presents acknowledges the inadequacy of measuring social class only as socioeconomic status and with objective indicators and not attending to its subjective meaning in understanding psychological development and behavior. Therefore, because DSI encompasses a multidimensional and psychological perspective of social status (Thompson & Subich, 2007), it provides an appropriate framework for the current study.

Social Class and Subjective Well-Being

Despite that social class has not received enough attention within psychological research, there still have been studies focusing on the relationship between social class, often as measured by SES, and other variables. One particular area of investigation has

been the relationship between social class and subjective well-being. Subjective well-being (SWB) is defined as a person's cognitive and affective evaluation of his or her life (Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995). A body of literature has linked social class and SWB, in both national and international samples. In their cross-cultural study, Diener, Sandvik, Seidlitz, and Diener (1993) found high income to be significantly related to SWB among general ($r = .13$) as well as college populations. Results of a study with a Pakistani sample showed that social class, measured as profession and education, was positively related to happiness and well-being, with a moderate effect size (Suhail & Chaudhry, 2004); another study found that being from a high-income class was positively related to SWB among an urban Chinese sample (Wang & VanderWeele, 2011); and a significant positive relationship between SES and SWB was also demonstrated among the elderly ($r = .17$; Pinqart & Sörensen, 2000). It has also been reported that the correlation between wealth and/or income and happiness differs with regard to the economic status of the country. Results of a meta-analytic study revealed that the effect size between SES and SWB was $r = 0.13$ among developed countries and $r = 0.20$ among developing countries (Howell & Howell, 2008).

Overall, an examination of the literature indicates an existing relationship between social class and SWB; though, the mechanisms that might account for this relationship need further exploration. Therefore, with the aim of filling this gap in the literature and understanding the ways in which social class might influence SWB, the current study theorizes that one mechanism via which social class is related to SWB could be the mediating effect of self-esteem. This is based on theoretical and empirical

data linking self-esteem to both social class and SWB. These relationships will be explored in further detail in the following sections.

Self-Esteem and Social Class

As aforementioned, one mechanism by which social class predicts SWB might be through the mediating effect of self-esteem. Self-esteem is the overall affective evaluation of one's own worth, value, or importance (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991). In their meta-analytic review, Twenge and Campbell (2002) examined the relationship between self-esteem and SES and found that SES had a small significant relationship with self-esteem among adults ($d = .19$, $r = .10$). However, taking into account the total sample size of 312,940, the importance of the existence of such an effect size becomes apparent. The effect size of the relationship between self-esteem and SES showed a pattern of change with age. That is, it was very small in young children, and indicated an increasing pattern with age, with a substantial increase during young adulthood, continually increasing until middle age, and then decreasing for adults over the age of 60. Thus, the accumulated literature seems to indicate a relationship between social class and self-esteem and that the strength of this relationship seems to vary with age, being very small in young children and peaking from early adulthood (around college age) to middle age.

Numerous conceptual theories have explained how and why social class affects self-esteem. The "reflected appraisals model" proposed that class affects how others view and treat us and we, in turn, internalize others' perceptions of ourselves. For example, people working at menial jobs or wearing old clothes might be humiliated and degraded by others, which leads to low self-esteem; whereas people with higher education and

income mostly receive respect and recognition, leading to higher self-esteem (Twenge & Campbell, 2002). Gecas and Seff (1989) stated that social class is a major social structural variable, that self-esteem is a major aspect of self-concept, and that there should be a positive association between social class and self-esteem. Gecas and Seff (1990) further proposed that individuals from higher classes possess greater power, prestige, and resources, which consequently increase their self-esteem, especially if these are perceived by oneself and others as “earned.” Other theories have also explained the relationship between social class and self-esteem. For example, the “social indicator or salience model” discussed the importance of saliency of one’s social class in affecting self-esteem, whereas the “self-protective mechanisms model” discussed that people from lower- or working-class backgrounds associate their class with external factors as a protective strategy against negative external feedback (Twenge & Campbell, 2002).

Overall, empirical literature proves the existence of a positive relationship between the variables of social class and self-esteem and indicates that the pattern of this relationship across the lifespan varies. Furthermore, conceptual accounts shed light on why such a relationship might exist. In the light of these accounts, it makes both empirical and conceptual sense that self-esteem might act as a mediating variable between social class and SWB. However, in order for a variable to be a mediator between two other variables, it has to have existing relationships with both of those variables (Frazier, Tix, & Barron, 2004). Therefore, in the following section, the relationship between self-esteem and SWB will be explored.

Self-Esteem and Subjective Well-being

Considering the global, internalized, and evaluative nature of self-esteem, it makes conceptual sense that self-esteem might act as a strong predictor of SWB, which also has a cognitive and affective evaluative nature. Furthermore, there is also empirical evidence that links self-esteem with SWB across various samples. In their study examining cross-cultural correlates of self-esteem and SWB among college students, Diener and Diener (1995) found that self-esteem and SWB are highly correlated. The strength of this relationship was higher in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures. Consistent with these findings, Smedema, Catalano, and Ebener (2010) found that positive feelings of self-worth and self-esteem were positively correlated with SWB among patients with spinal cord injury. Self-esteem also fully mediated the relationship between positive coping and SWB. Furthermore, self-esteem was a strong predictor of SWB among a sample of low-income and ethnically diverse urban youth (Vacek, Coyle, & Vera, 2010).

Research has also shown relationships between self-esteem and a variety of mental health outcomes, such as depression (Orth, Robins, & Roberts, 2008), anger and hostility (Bradshaw & Hazan, 2006), and pride and shame (Brown & Marshall, 2001). In addition, self-esteem is suggested to act as a support for health and well-being against a wide range of psychological threats (Routledge et al., 2010), and it was negatively associated with anxiety and positively associated with stress-coping (Greenberg et al., 1992)—providing further evidence of its importance for SWB.

Overall, extant literature suggests that self-esteem is positively related to SWB and negatively related to adverse mental health outcomes. Therefore, self-esteem is an appropriate variable that might act as a mediator between social class and SWB.

Critical Consciousness

Critical consciousness is a concept developed by Freire (1973, 1993) several decades ago as a result of his observations of the social conditions of the poor in Brazil, but only recently has it started developing as an area of study in psychological research. Critical consciousness emphasizes individuals' ability to reflect critically on their sociopolitical environment and take action towards change (Diemer, Kauffman, Koenig, Trahan, & Hsieh, 2006). It focuses on essential concepts such as identity reflection, analysis of power and privilege, and examination of assumptions (McDonough, 2009). Critical reflection means critically analyzing the various forms of oppression that lead to social inequity and injustice. It also means the moral rejection of those inequities that restrict well-being and human agency (Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011). It involves inquiring into one's own beliefs about social realities, the consideration of power in many forms, and reflecting on the complexities of multiple identities (McDonough, 2009; Freire, 1973). People who possess critical consciousness are aware of the historical, social, and cultural mores or ideologies that create what is acceptable or not within a particular society (Freire, 1994, as cited in Johnson & Freedman, 2005). Furthermore, people who possess critical consciousness also have the capacity to question their own place in society, to grow intellectually and emotionally, and to transform their social realities (Gatimu, 2009). Considered as the second step in critical consciousness development following critical reflection, critical action involves acting upon the

sociopolitical environment to create social change through transformative activism and civic engagement (Diemer, Rapa, Park, & Perry, 2014; Thomas et al., 2014).

For all these reasons, critical consciousness is considered to be an antidote to oppression, protecting individuals from negative experiences and the internalization of oppression, and it provides people with internal resources to cope with those experiences (Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999; Watts et al., 2011; Quintana & Segura-Herrera, 2003). Therefore, this study theorizes that the different levels of critical consciousness individuals have will change the strength of the relationship between social class and self-esteem. For this reason, critical consciousness will act as a moderator on the relation between social class and SWB through self-esteem. For example, it might be that higher levels of critical consciousness will allow individuals from lower-social-class backgrounds to become aware of the class-based inequalities in education and physical and mental health, and this will allow them to understand how the prestige, power, and respect one receives is affected by class status. Instead of perceiving these inequalities as a result of their own inferiority, they will attribute these inequalities to structural oppression and maintain their self-esteem, which will then have positive consequences for SWB.

Social Class and College Populations

Education is proposed to be a rich context for the study of the actual experience of social class because social class becomes more salient in academic environments, and students develop an understanding of their class status and explore its meaning as it relates to their identity and lives in educational settings (Ostrove & Cole, 2003).

Ostrove (2003) discussed how social class background shapes people's psychological experiences in college and proposed that meaningful implications of social class background carry on to the adulthood. Examining White working-class women's college experiences at an elite institution retrospectively, a qualitative study showed that these women felt they were more socially inadequate and isolated, more intimidated, more overwhelmed, and less academically prepared than upper-class women (Stewart & Ostrove, 1993). In another qualitative study exploring how the college context influences the class-based aspects of identity for lower-income students attending elite and state colleges, lower-income students attending an elite institute also reported higher levels of feelings of intimidation, discomfort, inadequacy, deficiency, exclusion, and powerlessness than lower-income state college students (Aries & Seider, 2005). In addition, these students explored the domain of social class more than low-income state college students. However, when compared to affluent students, low-income students in both types of colleges were more likely to minimize the role of class in the formation of their identity (Aries & Seider, 2007).

Furthermore, several studies have indicated positive correlations between social class and educational and occupational outcomes for college students, such that lower-class students had lower educational attainment and academic achievement and spent less time participating in co-curricular activities than their higher-class peers (Walpole, 2013), and parental education and income was positively and significantly related to college enrollment or completion (James & Amato, 2013). Additionally, greater financial stressors and difficulty affording one's basic needs were associated with increased

vulnerability to stress, poorer social functioning, and negative mental health among this population (Roberts, Golding, Towell, & Reid et al., 2000).

Therefore, it is evident that social class is an essential element influencing various psychological, academic, and career outcomes for college populations. Given that the research examining the relationship between social class and self-esteem has provided evidence that social class becomes an important determinant affecting self-esteem, particularly in young adulthood, the investigation of the relationship between social class and self-esteem among student populations in higher education is paramount.

For all these reasons, this study will target college students in order to expand the knowledge of how social class influences the lives of students from different class backgrounds and to promote the development and implementation of appropriate interventions.

Purpose of the Study and Research Hypotheses

In summary, the empirical and theoretical literature proves the existence of meaningful relationships between social class, self-esteem, SWB, and critical consciousness. The overarching goal of this study is to explore the complex mechanisms of how social class is related to SWB via self-esteem and critical consciousness among college students, using a moderated mediation model. It asks the following research questions:

- 1) Is the relationship between social class and SWB mediated by self-esteem?
- 2) Is the mediated effect of social class on SWB through self-esteem moderated by critical consciousness?

Specifically, the current study examines the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. It is expected that self-esteem will mediate the relationship between social class and SWB. That is, social class will have an indirect effect on SWB through self-esteem. Specifically, all these variables will be positively related to one another.

Hypothesis 2. It is expected that critical consciousness will moderate the indirect effect (i.e., mediated effect) of social class on SWB through self-esteem. In other words, the indirect effect of social class on SWB through self-esteem will be conditional on the value of critical consciousness. More specifically, a higher level of critical consciousness will buffer the negative effects of low social class on self-esteem.

In order to investigate these hypotheses, a quantitative research methodology—mediation and moderated mediation—will be used. Mediation explains how a variable predicts an outcome variable, and it requires preexisting relations between these variables (Frazier et al., 2004). Moderation explains when and for whom a variable strongly predicts an outcome, and it requires a sound theoretical rationale. Moderated mediation models explain how and when a given effect occurs (Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007). Moderated mediation is a sophisticated research methodology that helps systematically explore the existing empirical and theoretical relationships between mediated and moderated variables in one conceptual model (Hayes, 2013). It will help us understand the complex ways that social class might influence SWB.

In addition to expanding our understanding of the relationship between social class and SWB, specifically among college populations, this study is important and unique for several reasons. Firstly, despite that social class is acknowledged as an essential cultural construct and part of our social identities, much research is needed to understand how it affects psychological processes and outcomes (APA TFSS, 2007;

Ostrove & Cole, 2003). This study fills this gap in the literature and contributes to knowledge by systematically exploring the relationship between social class, self-esteem, critical consciousness, and SWB. Secondly, critical consciousness is a relatively new area of research in psychological literature, and there is a need for the systematic exploration of this construct in relation to social identity (Watts et al., 2011). Therefore, the current study also responds to this need by exploring the relationship between social class, which is an essential aspect of one's social identity, and critical consciousness. Thirdly, the present study acknowledges the need for further understanding of how social class affects college students' self-concept and well-being, an area of research that needs further exploration. Fourthly, the ability to understand the relationship between social class and SWB will inform practice and promote the development of appropriate interventions for individuals, in particular students from different class backgrounds. Lastly, this study acknowledges the lack of research attending the psychological meaning of class and treats it as a psychological variable, by a measure that captures its psychological meaning.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following chapter provides a comprehensive discussion of the methodological issues of the study of social class in the psychological literature and provides an understanding of how the DSI framework gives researchers an opportunity to address those issues. This chapter also presents a detailed review and critical analyses of the theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence that examine the relationships between social class, self-esteem, SWB, and critical consciousness. Finally, this chapter also discusses, with relevant research findings, the influence of social class on psychosocial experiences, SWB, and the mental health of students in higher education.

Role of Social Class in Psychology

Multicultural counseling places a strong emphasis on understanding the cultural identities of individuals and communities and using this understanding to generate culturally sensitive and effective interventions. It is essential for psychologists to understand the influence of sociocultural and political contexts on individual lives and our identities, behavior, and personality (Fouad & Brown, 2000; Heppner & Scott, 2004; Liu et al., 2004b; Nelson, Englar-Carlson, Tierney, & Hau, 2006). Social class, along with race and gender, is considered to be one of the three important cultural foundations, in research and theory, pertaining to multiculturalism (Pope-Davis & Coleman, 2001; Liu et al., 2004a). Despite that it plays a crucial role in human development and despite that

understanding this role is essential for us in becoming more effective as counseling psychologists, social class continues to remain as one of the least attended and understood cultural constructs in the psychological literature (Liu et al., 2004a; APA TFSS, 2007; Brown et al., 1996; Frable, 1997). Therefore, it is of paramount importance to give particular attention to and examine how social class impacts people's lives on affective, motivational, cognitive, and behavioral levels, to increase our awareness, knowledge, and skills and to provide the most competent and effective services to individuals from all social classes (Liu et al., 2004b). Increasing our awareness of the importance of the study of social class first requires a review of the important major issues related to social class research in the psychological literature.

Issues of Social Class Research

Lack of Inclusion of Social Class in Psychological Research

As previously mentioned, one important issue in social class research is the lack of its inclusion in psychological research. In their extensive content analysis of three counseling psychology journals between 1981 and 2000, Liu and colleagues (2004a) found that, among 3,915 articles that were reviewed, only 710 articles (18%) used social class as a variable or a construct. The use of social class in empirical articles (54%) was comparable to its use in theoretical articles (46%). It was reported that, in most of the articles, the researchers did not pay intentional attention to analyzing social class as a variable of interest, but instead they collected data on social class only as a demographic variable, which was reported but not analyzed. Furthermore, within the empirical articles that included social class, 31% used it only in the method section, and only 4% used it in the data analysis section. Additionally, amongst the total of 384 empirical articles that

included social class, only 14% of them mentioned it and incorporated it as a variable or a construct in all the introduction, method, results, and discussion sections. Therefore, it is evident in these findings that social class is very infrequently used in psychological research, particularly in counseling psychology, and when it is used, it is merely to describe participant demographics, as opposed to as being recognized as a psychological construct (Brown et al., 1996; Liu et al., 2004a, Liu et al., 2004b).

There have been several accounts trying to explicate this exclusion. For instance, Liu and his colleagues (2004a, 2004b) proposed that the inability to connect social class and classism as interrelated constructs limits our understanding of class. Race, gender, and sex are important aspects of one's identity, and they have received much attention in research because of the acknowledgement of racism, sexism, and homophobia as legitimate forms of discrimination and oppression. On the other hand, however, classism might still be considered as an acceptable or legitimized form of discrimination or oppression (Heppner & Scott, 2004), and this reduces the researchers' interest in examining its influence on individual experiences.

Another reason for this omission might be the belief in meritocracy and the recognition of social class as an achieved status as opposed to an ascribed status (Weber, 1998; APA TFSS, 2007). Several studies examining the attributions of poverty and wealth revealed that American society tends to assume that wealth or poverty are the results of personal characteristics, as opposed to structural factors (APA TFSS, 2007). These assumptions minimize the importance of economic inequalities and justify socioeconomic disparity. Along with the belief in an ideal American society, where all the members are free and equal, have equal access to resources, and have equal

opportunities for success, those attributions and assumptions play a significant role in silencing the critics of social class inequality (Hollingshead & Redlich, 1958; APA TFSS, 2007). Therefore, it can be argued that the avoidance of social class in psychology research may be the natural by-product of the ideation of a classless society (Heppner & Scott, 2004).

Finally, it has also been suggested that the lack of attention to social class might result from the absence of measures that would treat it as a cultural construct and capture the psychological experiences of individuals or groups related to social class status (Thompson & Subich, 2007).

Measuring Class as a Demographic Variable and with Objective Indicators

Despite the fact that social class has not been a central focus of investigation in psychological research (Brown et al., 1996; Fouad & Brown, 2000), researchers have still examined social class equitably as socioeconomic standing or status and as a categorical variable with the use of objective demographic indicators, including income, education, occupation, or various combination of these measures, rather than measuring it as a psychological and continuous variable (APA TFSS, 2007; Liu et al., 2004a). The APA TSFF (2007) proposed that each of these objective measures gives us an understanding of different aspects of social stratification and serves as a partial indicator of the resources that are available to the person. They further stated that those resources are connected with various elements of one's SES and that those resources will have a direct or an indirect influence on psychological, social, and cognitive development. For example, it was found that a higher level of education is directly and indirectly correlated with better

economic outcomes, effective social and psychological resources, and health-conscious behavior (Ross & Wu, 1995).

This type of conceptualization—that is, measuring income, education, occupation, or a combination of these variables to assess SES—follows a materialistic approach (APA TFSS, 2007). This approach is utilized to stratify or group individuals into social class categories, such as lower, lower-middle, middle, upper-middle, and upper class, and there are several problems both with using objective indicators and stratifying people into categories (Liu et al., 2004a; Oakes & Rossi, 2003; Archer, 2003). For example, assessing solely one's income to determine their socioeconomic standing is very limited and likely inaccurate because it does not reflect the individual's familial wealth (Fouad & Brown, 2000). TSFF (2007) proposed that wealth is a better measure of SES than a single measure of income, and it also takes into account the intergenerational transfers in addition to the individual's own income and savings. Additionally, the use of income to measure class does not allow for the examination of the individual's subjective psychological experiences. For instance, it does not capture the sense of financial and psychological safety one feels that comes with inheriting wealth from parents, or the feelings of shame, guilt, entitlement (Liu et al., 2004b), inadequacy, or pride associated with individuals' perceptions of their social class status. Furthermore, some people may place more emphasis on how well their income compares to those of others rather than the absolute value of their income (Liu et al., 2004b), and this subjective experience cannot be investigated by asking what their income is and placing the individuals into specified social class categories based on its monetary value.

Regarding measuring SES with education, although higher levels of education predict better life outcomes, categorizing people based on the level of education they receive does not reflect a variety of educational experiences and opportunities they have access to, including the quality of education, supportive and productive interpersonal relationships and networks they develop (e.g., Greek life, student clubs, and alumni associations), and the prestige of the school they attend, along with the career opportunities and the respect this prestige provides them with (Liu et al., 2004b; Liu, 2001; Hacker, 2013).

In a similar fashion, the prestige of one's occupation can lead to feelings of pride and recognition, as well as shame, humiliation, and invisibility. Although there are indexes measuring occupational prestige, such as the Hollingshed Index (Hollingshed, 1975), examining people's social class experiences simply by asking them what their occupation is will not allow us the opportunity to observe the psychological meaning of their social class for individuals.

Lack of a Social Class Theory

Despite the frequent use of objective indicators to assess social class, there is a lack of consensus regarding what indicators to use and when and what criteria to use to establish specific social class groups (Oakes & Rossi, 2003; Archer, 2003; Liu et al., 2004a). Even though various indicators of SES are not interchangeable and each one contributes to different elements of it, researchers seem to select different variables to measure SES without any particular rationale (APA TFSS, 2007; Argyle, 1994).

Furthermore, in their context analysis, Liu et al. (2004a) also indicated that, among the articles that considered class as a variable, it was found that there were 448 words used to

refer to, describe, and discuss social class and classism. Additionally, many of the keywords used for social class were used in an inconsistent fashion within the same article. This inconsistent use, in return, creates confusion about what the research measures and theory discusses (Liu et al., 2004a). Thus, it appears to be that researchers cannot agree on how to best operationalize SES, which variables would be the best indicators (e.g., income, education, occupation), and how different combinations of these variables constitute specific class groupings (APA TFSS, 2007). This lack of agreement about the operationalization of class and choosing measurement variables without any sound rationale stem from the lack of a unified definition and theoretical understanding of social class (Oaks & Rossi, 2003; Liu et al., 2004a), which supports the importance of the redefinition of social class and the development of a unified conceptualization. In light of these accounts, it is evident that the psychological literature needs to respond to these issues, which hinder our understanding of the complex nature of social class.

Differential Status Identity

The Differential Status Identity (DSI) framework has emerged from the search by psychologists for a sound conceptual foundation for and a complex understanding and assessment of social class (Thompson, 2008). It was proposed by Fouad and Brown (2000) in an effort to understand the effects of racial background and socioeconomic context on psychological and psychosocial development. As a multifaceted theoretical framework, DSI acknowledges social class as a cultural construct and a contextual variable, which is affected by the historical, social, economic, and political environment in which one lives.

Therefore, DSI presents a framework that allows for the examination of the processes whereby individuals internalize contextual factors such as race and social class and how this internalization in return influences the identity, development, and behavior of the individual. Fouad and Brown (2000) discuss how individuals' multiple identities, such as race and social class, influence the development of their perception of themselves (i.e., self-concept), the development of how they perceive and internalize their social status (i.e., perceived social status), and the development of how they are perceived by others in society. They suggest that individuals compare themselves to others in society in terms of access to economic resources, social power, and social prestige. To the extent that they differ or perceive themselves to differ from others, along with the meaning they attach to this difference (or similarity), inform their understanding of their social class status—perceived or subjective social class.

DSI not only considers one's social class and race as important and salient parts of identity, but it also purports that they will be even more salient aspects in one's identity if the individual belongs to a non-ordinant group in the society rather than to the ordinant group (which is middle-class in the US), and consequently, they will have the most substantial effect on psychosocial development for people from the non-ordinant group. For example, social class will be more influential on the development of a child from a lower-class background than it is on the development of a child who is from a middle-class background (Fouad & Brown, 2000).

In a university setting, for instance, students from a lower-class background will be more aware of their social class status as they compare themselves to their peers, who accumulated various social and cultural capital through the various experiential

opportunities they had prior to college. This in return might lead to the feelings of inadequacy, unpreparedness, shame, anxiety, and humiliation, which might then lead to distancing themselves from making connections on campus to prevent these feelings or might prevent them from reaching for support and utilization of resources. On the contrary, the influence of the social class will not be as salient for students from the ordinant group because of the absence of those negative emotions and of the need to compare themselves, since they belong to a majority group. In a similar fashion, social class will also be more salient and influential for students from upper-class backgrounds than for those than from middle class (Thompson, 2008). This influence will most likely be more protective for these students, because their privileged differences from the ordinant group in terms of resources, prestige, and power will become more salient in educational settings, which in return might lead to feelings of pride, entitlement, and a more positive self-concept. Although Fouad and Brown (2000) acknowledged that social class is important for psychological development of upper-class individuals, they emphasized that the “psychological consequences of social stratification operate more powerfully for those in the subordinate groups” (p. 387).

As a multidimensional conceptualization of social status, DSI theory is comprised of three interrelated structural factors: economic resources, social prestige, and social power, which are important elements that contribute to the subjective and psychological experience of social class. This multidimensional approach provides psychologists with the ability to explore the different experiences of individuals within the same income level (Thompson, 2008). For example, an artist, with an income that would put him or her on the lower-middle or lower class when measured objectively, may feel more well-

regarded in the society and prestigious regarding their occupation than a bus driver on the same income level. As another example, the perceived social status of a bus driver from a racial and ethnic minority group might be different than a bus driver who self-identifies and is perceived by others as White. These are the elements of social class that cannot be understood by using the traditional and objective indicators of social class but are acknowledged by the DSI theory.

Overall, DSI theory appears to respond to the issues that so far have been discussed in this chapter. First of all, DSI theory recognizes the sociopolitical and cultural nature of social class and acknowledges it as a psychological variable. As such, it emphasizes its importance on identity, psychosocial development, and behavior, all of which would help increase its visibility in multicultural psychological research. Second, DSI allows for the integration of people's subjective perceptions and psychological experiences of social class, while still taking into account one's economic resources, education, and occupation with broader and more complex conceptualizations. Third, DSI provides a complex and multifaceted theoretical framework. For all these reasons, DSI provides an appropriate theoretical foundation for the understanding and assessment of social class in this study.

Subjective Well-being

Psychological research has long been interested in understanding the construct of subjective well-being (SWB), its predictors, and its relation to other psychological constructs. The first extensive review of SWB research was introduced by Wilson (1967). Wilson presented a number of conclusions regarding the predictors of SWB, most particularly by conceptualizing SWB as happiness (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999).

These predictors involved predominantly demographic characteristics, including income, education, occupation, marital status, and age. Study of SWB has expanded with the publication of a substantial amount of empirical and theoretical articles during the last few decades. This extant literature has provided us with a comprehensive understanding regarding the correlates of SWB. With a shift in focus, however, investigators started to become more interested in understanding the processes that underlie SWB and explicating its relationships with those variables, rather than simply describing their correlations with SWB (Diener et al., 1999).

The interest in SWB partly emerged as a reaction to the strong emphasis on negative mood states and psychopathology in the field of psychology (Diener et al., 1999). Diener and his colleagues stated that growth in the field of SWB parallels the societal value placed on the individual, the importance of attending to the individual's subjective perception in evaluating their lives, and the awareness that well-being involves positive elements. In addition to our understanding of its predictors, the definition of SWB has also evolved over the last few decades. Even though there has been significant variability in how researchers and theorists understood SWB, the definition that Diener and his colleagues (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985; Diener et al., 1999) postulated, which describes SWB as people's cognitive and affective evaluations of their lives, has been widely recognized and utilized by SWB researchers around the globe. In this definition, the affective component involves both positive and negative mood states, and the cognitive component represents people's global judgments of life satisfaction.

Over the last few decades, researchers have extensively focused on the relation between SWB and social class, albeit conceptualizing social class as SES rather than as a

psychological variable. However, there have also been recent studies that examined the relationship between SWB and subjective social class. Furthermore, as a means to explore if social class predicts SWB, an extensive amount of research has also examined the relationship between social class and various correlates of mental health, consistent with the belief that well-being correlates with the absence of psychological symptoms (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003). Below, I discuss and critically examine the results of several relevant studies that produced both converging and diverging evidence.

Social Class and Subjective Well-Being

One area of frequent focus regarding the relationship between social class and SWB has been the examination of the correlations between SWB and objective indicators of SES. Different lines of research with this focus included within-country correlations between SWB and SES and between-country correlations of average SWB and the national wealth of the countries, along with changes in SWB of individuals with a decrease or increase in income (Diener et al., 1999). These studies often measured SES either by solely assessing it with income, occupation, or education, or by producing a composite score of some or all of these variables. SWB has mostly been measured as life satisfaction, as well as happiness, quality of life, domain satisfaction (e.g., satisfaction with work and family), study-specific operationalizations, and the presence of positive affect and absence of negative affect (Howell & Howell, 2008).

In an earlier meta-analytic study among US-based samples, Haring, Stock, and Okun (1984) found positive and significant relationships between SWB and income ($r = .17$), SWB and occupational status ($r = .11$), and SWB and SES (composite score of education, income, and occupation, $r = .20$). Similarly, in their longitudinal study with a

nine-year interval, Diener et al. (1993) found significant relationships between income and SWB among American adults ($r = 0.13$ at Time 1, $r = 0.12$ at Time 2). With two cross-cultural studies they conducted with large college samples in developed and less-developed countries, Diener and his colleagues (1993, 1995) found significant correlations between income and life satisfaction and happiness. Additionally, a relatively recent meta-analysis also found a significant relationship between SES and SWB ($r = 0.13$ for developed countries, $r = 0.20$ for developing countries; Howell & Howell, 2008). The relation between SES and SWB was strongest when SES was measured as wealth rather than as income.

These results indicate that one's social class, as measured with objective indicators, is related to their SWB, a finding replicated across both national and cross-cultural samples, with small to moderately strong effect sizes. Although most of the literature has indicated a positive relationship between SES and SWB, there are also studies that have yielded diverging results. For example, it was suggested that affluent countries, such as Japan and Germany, report lower levels of happiness than smaller countries (e.g., Ireland), and a negative relationship was found between parental education and occupational status and SWB among American adolescents (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999); income did not significantly correlate with SWB among British adults (Clark & Oswald, 1994); and income change did not produce increased SWB among lottery winners (Brickman, Coates, & Janoff-Bulman, 1978) and for people who experienced income fluctuations within a decade period (Diener et al., 1993).

Despite the fact that the literature has produced significant, though mostly small, effects and a limited number of diverging results, there is also a sizable body of literature

documenting the evidence on social class differences in mental health outcomes. A meta-analytic review of sixty studies conducted with samples from developed countries in North America and Europe showed that individuals from low-SES backgrounds were more likely to experience depression (odds ratio = 1.81) than individuals from higher SES backgrounds (Lorant, Deliege, Eaton, & Robert, 2003).

Additional research has revealed that there are associations between lower SES and lower sense of control and optimism (Chen, Matthews, & Boyce, 2002), negative emotions and cognitions and poorer physical health (Gallo & Matthews, 2003); that people in lower socioeconomic groups experience higher levels of distress, fatigue, pain, and mental illness compared to their higher-SES counterparts (Stansfeld, Head, & Marmot, 1998); and that lower income is correlated with higher perceived constraints, lower perceived mastery, and lower life satisfaction, with sense of control being a protective factor (Lachman & Weaver, 1998).

Although much of the research used objective social-class measures, there have also been studies that looked at the relationships between subjective social class and/or status and SWB and various psychological outcomes within the last decade and a half. Adler, Epel, Castellazzo, and Ickovics (2000) compared how well objective and subjective social statuses separately correlate with psychological health. They defined subjective social status as subjective SES as measured by participants' self-perception of where they exist on a social ladder, with regards to money, education, and occupation, as compared to others in the society, and they defined objective SES as a composite score of education, income, and occupation. Results revealed that subjective social class significantly correlated with negative affect ($r = -.31$), chronic stress ($r = -.36$),

subjective stress ($r = -.25$), pessimism ($r = -.37$), control over life ($r = .26$), active coping ($r = .24$), and passive coping ($r = -.33$), whereas objective social class only significantly correlated to pessimism ($r = -.20$) and passive coping ($r = -.20$).

Lundberg and Kristenson (2008) obtained similar results when they compared the relationships between objective social status (i.e., occupation and education) and subjective social status (i.e., self-reported economy) and psychosocial resources among Swedish adults. Their results indicated that subjective social status had greater significant positive associations with mastery, self-esteem, and perceived control and greater negative associations with hopelessness, depression and cynicism than did occupation and education.

Anderson, Kraus, Galinsky, & Keltner (2012) proposed that sociometric status, which represents the respect, admiration, and leadership roles individuals have in their daily interactions, is a better predictor of SWB than SES, because sociometric status affects one's sense of power and social acceptance, which are two critical factors of psychological well-being. Examining this proposition with a college sample, their results showed that sociometric status significantly and positively correlated with SWB, positive emotions, and lower levels of negative emotions than did income. They asserted that people with high sociometric status have more control over their social environment and decision-making processes, more sense of power and autonomy, and a greater sense of belonging, all of which produce positive outcomes for SWB. Furthermore, it was also indicated that subjective SES (adolescents' self-assessment of their family's social class) significantly correlated with overall well-being and positive mental health compared to objective measures of SES (parental education and occupation) among a Hungarian

adolescent sample (Varga, Piko, & Fitzpatrick, 2014). Finally, among an Asian-American college sample, Yoon, Hacker, Hewitt, Abrams, and Cleary (2012) found that expected social status (self-perception of one's social status in 10–20 years from now) was significantly associated with SWB ($r = .20$), positive affect ($r = .27$), and negative affect ($r = -.17$), producing rather higher correlations than previous research. It is important to note here that these researchers conceptualized social status from a DSI framework and used the Differential Status Identity Scale for its measurement, which I will expand on further in the next chapter.

Taken together, the literature suggests significant and positive correlations between social class and SWB. That is, individuals from lower-class backgrounds experience lower levels of life satisfaction, have less positive indicators of mental health (e.g., self-esteem, optimism, and perceived mastery), and present with higher psychological symptoms (e.g., depression and stress) than people from higher social classes. These results have been replicated across national and international samples and also appear when social class is measured both by subjective and objective indicators. Below, I provide a closer look at these results and compare and critically examine them in the context of the major issues of social class research described in the previous section.

Despite the fact that research has consistently shown significantly positive relationships between objective SES and SWB, the effect size of this relationship has been found to be relatively small. In alignment with the arguments presented earlier in this chapter, the reviewed studies used different objective measures of SES to assess social class. Furthermore, they did so inconsistently and without any particular rationale,

clear operationalization, or theoretical framework, all of which may have contributed to the low predictive power of objective measures of social class (Liu et al., 2004a). Furthermore, SWB is one's cognitive and affective evaluations of one's life. Thus, considering the complex nature of human experience and the interplay between various external, personal, and biological factors influencing those evaluations, effect sizes ranging between $r = .13$ and $r = .20$ are still not negligible. Additionally, the larger effect sizes in less developed countries than in wealthy countries might also indicate that lower SES is related with lower SWB, despite the fact that this finding can also be interpreted in terms of diminishing returns, better practices of human rights, and increased freedom in wealthy countries (Diener et al., 1995).

The finding that indicated winning the lottery or increases in one's income did not predict happiness and SWB is not surprising from the perspective of conceptualizing social class as an identity variable as opposed to solely as income and/or wealth. Winning the lottery and other increases in income expand people's economic resources and ability to afford goods and services; though, it does not necessarily change their place in the society with regards to other aspects of social class, such as power and prestige, and their effects on self-concept. As DSI theory suggests, one's economic resources, which include factors such as income, education level, and economic security, are indeed aspects of social class, which are important to measure, most specifically in terms of how people compare themselves to others regarding these resources. However, assessing social class solely with these or other objective indicators, or by asking for an individual's income or education level, is insufficient. Such a limited approach fails to attend to social class as a

psychological construct and capture its subjective meaning for the individual and their experiences.

Therefore, it is promising that, with a recent shift in focus, researchers have started to incorporate subjective measures to assess social class. Results of these studies have shown stronger effect sizes for subjective measures than objective measures. These findings could also explain the small effect sizes in wealthy countries, because when measured with subjective measures, social class predicted SWB and psychological outcomes much more strongly than objective social class in wealthy countries. However, similar to researchers' inconsistent approach to the understanding and measurement of objective SES, there also remains the inconsistency and large variation in conceptualizing, naming, and measuring subjective social class and using appropriate measures (e.g., self-reported economy, sociometric studies, or the ladder defined differently in different studies). This continues to create confusion among researchers and makes it difficult to compare results across studies and have accumulated knowledge.

Additionally, another limitation existing in social class research that uses subjective measures is their limited ability to assess social class as a psychological variable. For example, Lundberg and Kristenson (2008) measured subjective social status with "self-rated economy" by asking participants to rate their household economy on a scale ranging from "very good" to "very poor" and report if they had difficulties paying rent and mortgages, etc. Similarly, Adler et al. (2000) asked participants to rank themselves on a social ladder with regards to money, education, and occupation to assess subjective social status. While these conceptualizations go beyond the traditional objective measures and examine the participants' perceptions of their statuses as they

compare themselves to others in the society, they are still based on a materialistic approach and may not fully assess social class as a psychological construct.

Finally, one consistent finding across studies using both types of social class measures was that lower class was associated with lower sense of power and control over one's environment and decision-making processes, along with a lower sense of social acceptance and respect. Thus, this suggests that, in addition to economic resources (which include income, education level, economic security, etc.), power and prestige, two of the main constructs of the DSI framework, are also important aspects of one's social class identity.

Overall, these results show the established relationship between social class and SWB and highlight the importance of addressing the limitations in research, including the need to develop a complex understanding of the effects of social class on SWB, to conceptualize social class from a sound theoretical framework, and to use measures that capture the subjective and psychological meaning of social class and assess different aspects of it, such as economic resources, social power, and social prestige.

For these reasons, this study conceptualizes social class within the DSI framework and as the extent to which individuals differ or are perceived to differ from others in the society with regards to economic resources, power, and prestige (Fouad & Brown, 2000) and will use the term "subjective social class" to define it. To this end, I will use The Differential Status Identity Scale developed by Brown and his colleagues (2002) for its measurement. SWB in this study is operationalized as people's cognitive and affective evaluations of their lives, and I will use The Satisfaction With Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985), a scale that is widely and globally applied to measure SWB. Additionally, because

SWB also involves affective components, that is positive and negative mood states in its definition, consistent with previous research, I will also measure SWB through the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Several studies have indicated high correlations between life satisfaction and positive and negative affect, though they are still independent constructs that need independent examination (Vacek et al., 2010).

To address the need to illuminate the complex processes that might underlie the relationship between SWB and social class and draw causal inferences in the absence of true experimental designs with sophisticated methodologies, the present study investigates the mechanisms through which social class might predict SWB with mediation and moderated mediation models. It hypothesizes that one path whereby social class is related to SWB might be through the mediating effect of self-esteem. Frazier et al. (2004) suggest that a mediator variable should have existing, theoretical, and empirical relationships with both the predictor and the outcome variables. Therefore, in the following two sections, I will discuss the theoretical and empirical literatures that have established associations between self-esteem and social class and self-esteem and SWB, respectively. Following that, I will continue with a review of critical consciousness, the moderator variable of this study, and discuss why it is hypothesized to moderate the indirect effect of social class on SWB through self-esteem.

Self-Esteem and Social Class

Self-esteem is defined as “the extent to which one prizes, values, approves, or likes oneself” or “the overall affective evaluation of one’s own worth, value, or importance,” and it is referred to by various names, including self-worth and self-respect

(Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991, p. 115). Fouad and Brown (2000) propose that individuals learn about themselves in their cultural contexts and those contexts influence how they perceive themselves and others and how others perceive them. They suggest that the self is a product of our cultural world, and along with race, they view class as a dynamic variable that influences how our social and personal identities are formed. Several other theorists have also emphasized the role of social class on the construction of the self and our evaluation of the self. Gecas and Seff (1989) argued that, because social class is a major social structural variable and self-esteem is a major component of self-concept, there should be a positive link between these two constructs. Similarly, Demo and Savin-Williams (1983) addressed that social class is a crucial macro-structural determinant that should be incorporated into research to get a better understanding of societal effects on self-esteem. Below, I review and discuss the literature that examines both the empirical and conceptual relationships between these constructs.

Empirical Research

Twenge and Campbell (2002) stated that SES and self-esteem are the two important variables that have been examined the most frequently in research. Rosenberg and Pearlin (1978) conducted the first groundbreaking study looking at the relationship between social class and self-esteem, conceptualizing social class as SES and measuring it via occupation, income, and education. Among urban samples of two US cities, their results indicated no significant relationships between social class and self-esteem among preadolescents, a modest relationship among early and later adolescents, and a moderate relationship among adults. A substantial number of studies followed Rosenberg and Pearlin. After reviewing 446 articles that examined the relationship between self-esteem

and SES (defined as an individual's, parent's, or family's income, education, and occupation, or any combination of these variables), Twenge and Campbell (2002) found a small but significant positive correlation among adults (between 18 and 50 years of age; $d = .19$, $r = .10$). However, given the large sample size, the existence of such an effect size is not negligible. Moreover, the strength of this relationship was very small in young children and started to increase with age, with a substantial increase during young adulthood, continually increasing until middle age, and then decreasing for adults over the age of 60. Additionally, correlations were higher for occupation and education than income. On the contrary, in a more recent study, James and Amato (2013) showed that parents' education was not associated with self-esteem, whereas parental income significantly correlated with higher self-esteem for adolescents and young adults. Furthermore, in this longitudinal study, the authors also found that self-esteem mediated the relationship between parental income and college enrolment or completion of their children.

Other studies compared the differences between objective and subjective measures of social class in predicting self-esteem. Wiltfang and Scarbecz (1990) found no significant relationships between self-esteem and social class when class was measured by father's occupation and a small positive relationship when measured by the father's education. Furthermore, when more "nontraditional measures" of class were used, such as the adolescents' subjective accounts of father's employment status or neighborhood characteristics, results yielded a more modest effect. Subsequent research produced both diverging and converging results. For example, a more recent cross-cultural study (Varga et al., 2014) found that both parents' education and employment

status predicted adolescent self-esteem (odds ratios = .7 & .4, respectively); however, subjective socioeconomic status (measured by adolescent's report of family SES) was a better predictor (odds ratio = .3) than the objective measures in this study. Finally, among a Swedish adult sample, while occupation ($r = .11$) and education ($r = .15$) significantly correlated with self-esteem, subjective social status was a much stronger predictor ($r = .33$; Lundberg & Kristenson, 2008).

Overall, empirical findings prove an existing relationship between self-esteem and social class, which has been observed when social class was measured both with objective indicators of SES and with subjective measures. However, similar to those observed in the literature examining the relationship between social class and SWB, a closer look at these empirical findings illuminates several differences based on the type of measure used to assess social class. First, even though there was generally a small but significant positive relationship between self-esteem and social class when class was measured by objective indicators, this finding was not consistent across studies. That is, depending on which objective measure was used (e.g., income, education, or occupation), not only the effect size of the relationship changed but also whether the relationship existed or not. Second, contrary to the inconsistency observed with objective measures, the relationship between social class and self-esteem was consistently significant and positive when social class was measured with subjective measures. Third, the strength of the relationship was much stronger when social class was measured with subjective measures than objective measures. Forth, the inconsistent use of measures of subjective social class, which might not entirely capture its psychological meaning, continues among researchers. These factors re-emphasize the importance of the use of subjective

social class measures that have a theoretical foundation and treat social class as a psychological variable.

One important finding to highlight in social class and self-esteem research is that the relationship between the two indicates a changing pattern with age. Despite the fact that the research is not conclusive about how social class influences children's self-concept, it has consistently indicated that there is a significant relationship between social class and self-esteem among late adolescents and young adults. This finding emphasizes the need to examine this relationship within college-aged populations.

Theoretical Conceptualizations

In addition to the empirical findings, several theoretical arguments have been proposed to explain the relationship between self-esteem and social class. The three most relevant frameworks that have been frequently utilized are: (1) the Social Indicator or Salience Model, (2) the Reflected Appraisals Model, and (3) the Self-Protective Mechanisms Model (Twenge & Campbell, 2002). Below, I review how these perspectives view this relationship and might explain some of the research findings described above.

The Social Indicator or Salience Model. The social indicator or salience model assumes that SES is an indicator of social status and when people succeed at acquiring wealth, which is equated with status, this results in higher self-esteem. On the contrary, when people cannot achieve high status, this might negatively affect how they view themselves and lower their self-esteem. Thus, this model suggests a positive correlation between SES and self-esteem, and this correlation is more pronounced in the US due to the belief in the equal access to opportunity and meritocracy (Twenge & Campbell,

2002). According to this model then, an individual who belongs to a high social class is perceived to earn their status and wealth through hard work and exceptional personal abilities, and an individual from a lower class is recognized as deserving their low status because of their laziness, lack of work ethic, or insufficient abilities.

An important assumption of this model is that SES has different meaning and saliency to individuals based on different developmental and contextual factors such as age, gender, race and culture. Individuals will vary on how much emphasis they put on SES to evaluate their self-esteem based on these variables because of the different psychological “centrality” for the individual (Rosenberg & Pearlin, 1978; Gecas & Seff, 1990; Twenge & Campbell, 2002). For instance, with regards to the finding that the effect size of the relationship between self-esteem and SES changes with age, this model would suggest that SES is not a salient determinant of the self-concept of children because class status is not earned through their own capabilities and accomplishments but is acquired through their parents (Rosenberg & Pearlin, 1978). On the other hand, class status is more salient for adults because they evaluate themselves based on class. On the contrary, however, class identity has been depicted “as a structure of feeling, a complex psychological matrix acquired in childhood,” speaking to its importance even for very young children (Stedman, 1985, as cited in Felski, 2000, p. 39). Similarly, the empirical literature has shown that even first graders had a grasp of the differences between upper, middle, and lower classes (e.g., Tudor, 1971, as cited in APA TFSS, 2007) and preschool children are aware of class differences and able to classify people by social class (Ramsey, 1991), suggesting that children develop awareness of social class at a relatively young age.

The Reflected Appraisals Model. The reflected appraisals model asserts that people internalize others' perceptions of themselves, a process sometime referred as the "looking-glass self" or the "internalization of stigma" (Twenge & Campbell, 2002, p. 61). From the point of view of this model, social class shapes self-esteem because it influences how others view and treat us, which is eventually internalized by the self and reflected in self-esteem. Thus, if others perceive individuals as lower class or lower status and treat them as inferior or humiliate them based on those perceptions, it is likely that those individuals will see themselves similarly, resulting in a more negative self-concept. On the other hand, higher-social-class individuals will often be treated with respect and dignity, and this will result in the formation of a positive self-concept and high self-esteem. Furthermore, because people from higher social classes possess greater social and emotional capital, which act as a protective shield, even if they experience humiliation or disdain from others, they will be better able to cope and not internalize those devaluing experiences (Aslund et al., 2009; Starrin, 2002).

The Self-Protective Mechanisms Model. In contrast to the reflected appraisals model, the self-protective mechanisms model posits that people employ various strategies that shield them from external feedback. For instance, it suggests that people from lower social backgrounds might compare themselves to people who have even lower status, power, and financial resources in an effort to protect their self-esteem (Twenge and Campbell, 2002). Furthermore, unlike the self-attribution that the social indicator/salience model discusses (i.e., people perceive social class as earned/deserved and attribute it to personal qualities), this model suggests that lower-class people attribute their lower status to external factors for protection. However, Twenge and Campbell argued that people are

less likely to associate their social class experiences to societal prejudice or classism but usually feel responsible for their lower status. In a following section, where I review critical consciousness, I will discuss how development of critical consciousness can actually help individuals become aware of those associations between their class-based experiences and social injustice and oppression through intentional effort, which then can act as a protective mechanism for individuals from lower social class backgrounds.

Overall, similar to the empirical findings, theoretical arguments also implicate that there is a relationship between social class and self-esteem. Furthermore, these theoretical arguments also discuss different ways in which social class can influence the development and maintenance of self-concept and self-esteem in various different ways.

Self-Esteem and Subjective Well-being

As aforementioned, in order to act as a mediator, a variable needs to have an established relationship both with the predictor and outcome variables. Given the global, internalized, and evaluative nature of self-esteem and its role of being a critical determinant of self-concept, it becomes theoretically evident that self-esteem would serve as predictor for SWB. Furthermore, the relationship between self-esteem and SWB has also been established by empirical studies that examined this relationship directly, and indirectly by looking at the correlations between self-esteem and different indicators of mental health.

In their cross-cultural study across 31 countries, which sampled 13,118 college students, Diener and Diener (1995) found that self-esteem and SWB were highly correlated ($r = .47$). This finding was replicated in a more recent study conducted by Schimmack and Diener (2003) among a US-based college sample and with a stronger

correlation ($r = .59$). Based on these cross-cultural findings, it is apparent that self-esteem is a strong predictor of SWB among college students. Consistent with these findings, other studies have found similar relationships between self-esteem and SWB among different populations, such as among low-income and ethnically diverse urban youth (Vacek et al., 2010), among individuals with spinal cord injury (Smedema et al., 2010), and among the elderly (Pinquart & Sörensen, 2000).

Research has also demonstrated negative correlations between self-esteem and psychological symptoms, such as aggression (Bradshaw & Hazan, 2006), depression (Orth et al., 2008), and shame (Brown & Marshall, 2001). Additionally, self-esteem has an anxiety-buffering function and was also positively correlated with stress coping and physiological health (Greenberg et al., 1992). Thus, all these results strengthen the evidence for the predictive value of self-esteem on SWB.

Overall, empirical findings and theoretical arguments demonstrate established relationships between social class and self-esteem and self-esteem and SWB, all of which together suggest that self-esteem might act as a good mediator between social class and SWB. In the following section, I will discuss critical consciousness, the moderator of the present study, by reviewing its development, premises and main components, as well as provide a rationale about why it might serve as a moderator between social class and self-esteem.

Critical Consciousness

Critical consciousness was introduced by Freire (1973, 1993), a Brazilian educator, based on his observations of the social circumstances of the poor in Brazil. Based on his observations, Freire concluded that oppression not only results in the

oppressed and marginalized groups becoming functionally illiterate but also being unable to critically “read” the social inequalities (Diemer et al., 2006). Therefore, Freire coined the term *conscientizacao* (consciousness) and developed critical consciousness as a pedagogical tool to help the Brazilian poor reflect on, that is “read,” their environment and act upon it (Diemer et al., 2006). Following this, in contemporary literature, critical consciousness is conceptualized as the capacity of individuals from oppressed and marginalized backgrounds to critically reflect on their sociopolitical environment and take action towards social change (Diemer et al., 2006). Thus, critical consciousness involves two components: (1) critical reflection and (2) critical action. These two components are proposed to have a transitive relationship in that greater levels of reflection will lead to greater levels of action (Freire, 1973; Diemer et al., 2014).

Critical Reflection

Critical reflection is the ability of oppressed and marginalized people to critically analyze their environment and the social, economic, and political circumstances that perpetuate structural oppression and injustice, through participation in collective and collaborative dialogue (Diemer et al., 2006; Diemer & Li, 2011).

From Freire’s perspective, oppressed and marginalized people internalize the thoughts and assumptions of the oppressor and the external acts of oppression, which then forms into a self-concept that is built upon an “internalized inferiority.” In other words, the same as what the reflected appraisals model suggests, Freire discussed how the oppressed start to view and understand themselves through the eyes and realities of the oppressor. Freire also argued that oppression is “dehumanizing” because it obstructs the capability of the oppressed to name, analyze, and give meaning to their experiences

and the development of self-affirmation and an integrated sense of self (Quintana & Segura-Herrera, 2003). Furthermore, when the oppressed is *unconscious* of the reality, they continue to remain vulnerable to oppressive acts and their deleterious consequences.

For these reasons, critical analysis should involve challenging this established way of knowing, thinking, and feeling. It requires a critical inquiry into an individual's accepted knowledge and beliefs about social realities and the self, an understanding of how they are created by the historical and cultural practices and ideologies, and an awareness of how power operates to maintain those realities that perpetuate inequity (Freire, 1993; Hopper, 1999; McDonough, 2009). Through critical reflection, the oppressed starts to examine their unquestioned place in the society, recognize that they exist within a larger social context that involves differences in power and privilege, and moves from a "blaming the victim" perspective towards thinking about the systemic causes that create various injustices and unequal treatment between different groups (Watts et al., 2011).

The critical consciousness does not merely refer to the acknowledgement of social inequalities and their consequences. It also involves the rejection of those inequalities, affirmation of equality, and belief in one's capacity to transform themselves and the society, which then leads to individual or collective action taken to change those perceived inequities (Freire, 1973; Watts et al., 2011; Diemer et al., 2014). Thus, critical consciousness involves deconstructing and disentangling the reflected appraisals or "false consciousness" of the self, rebuilding a more integrated self, and offering a perspective that will protect the marginalized and oppressed individuals against the deleterious consequences of oppression (Quintana & Segura-Herrera, 2003).

Critical Action

Critical consciousness development is proposed to follow a developmental sequence. Thus, once the individual critically reflects on their sociopolitical environment, that is names and critically analyzes the oppression and inequity and understands their underlying reasons and consequences, the next step is taking action. It was proposed that the individual must recognize their capacity and skills to change the sociopolitical structure and create social change. As aforementioned, critical action involves individual and collective effort and collaborative participation, and it can be implemented via various forms of civic engagement and activism (Diemer & Li, 2011, Diemer et al., 2014; Thomas, et al., 2014).

Empirical Research

Although it is an emerging field of study, several empirical studies have examined critical consciousness and its relation to various mental health, educational, and vocational outcomes. For example, in a study among Latino college students, Gutierrez and Ortega (1991) indicated that students who attended group sessions that promoted critical consciousness development via constructive dialogue had experienced greater sociopolitical empowerment than the control group or the experimental group, which focused on strengthening only ethnic identity. As part of a participatory HIV prevention peer education program developed for South African youth, critical consciousness has been linked to a healthier approach to sexual behavior through the critical analysis of and reflection on gender and social class (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002). Critical consciousness has also been linked to positive career development and vocational identity in a sample of ethnically and socioeconomically marginalized youth (Diemer & Blustein,

2006), lower amounts of personal helplessness among African-American youth (Zimmerman, Ramírez-Valles, & Maton, 1999), and increases in the likelihood of achievement of one's educational and occupational goals among youth of color (Diemer, 2009).

Critical Consciousness as a Moderator

In sum, individuals from marginalized groups are exposed to various forms microaggressions and societal oppression, including but not limited to classism, racism, sexism, homophobia, immigration status, and sizeism, which in return make them susceptible to attacks on self-esteem, internalized oppression, and the emergence of several psychological and physical symptoms (Thomas et al., 2014). Despite the fact that the study of critical consciousness is comparatively recent, the accumulated findings support the importance of critical consciousness in promoting better psychological as well as vocational outcomes.

It is possible that through the critical analysis of structural inequalities, critical reflection on their consequences, and taking action to towards change, critical consciousness acts as a protective mechanism to prevent the negative effects of oppression and reduce the strength of internalized inferiority on the self-concept. This, in return, might have positive consequences for self-esteem and psychological well-being for people from oppressed backgrounds. It is also important here to note that, although critical consciousness emerged from the experiences of the oppressed and the focus is usually on how oppressed and marginalized people develop the capacity for critical reflection and action, the capacity for critical consciousness is also essential for people from privileged groups in learning about oppression and the functions of social injustice

and developing responsiveness to acts of oppression (Watts et al., 2011; Quintana & Segura-Herrera, 2003).

For all these reasons, the present study examines if critical consciousness will act as a moderator for the indirect influence of social class on SWB through self-esteem by buffering the negative effects of low social class on one's self-esteem.

Measurement of Critical Consciousness

Critical consciousness has influenced and been conceptualized by various developmental frameworks that discussed different skills and abilities required for critical reflection and critical action (Diemer, et al., 2014; Thomas et al., 2014). Accordingly, several different instruments that assess the different as well as similar aspects of critical consciousness have been developed (for a detailed review, see Diemer, McWhirter, Ozer, & Rapa, 2015, and Shin, Ezeofor, Smith, Welch, & Goodrich, 2016). The present study utilized two different instruments: (1) the Critical Consciousness Scale (CCI) of Thomas et al. (2014) and (2) the Critical Consciousness Scale (CCS) of Diemer et al. (2014). The CCS measures critical awareness of societal and structural inequities, endorsement of societal equality for all groups, and sociopolitical participation. Incorporating social-perspective taking and sociopolitical development, CCI attends to the developmental aspect of critical consciousness, measures awareness of social injustice and discrimination, and assesses critical action on a rather interpersonal level. Therefore, in order to provide a comprehensive conceptualization of all aspects of critical consciousness, I will use both of these measures, for which I will provide more detailed information in the third chapter.

Social Class in Academic Settings

It was proposed that educational institutions are settings where social class and classism become salient concerns (APA TFSS, 2007), where institutional discrimination occurs (Lareau, 1987), and where middle-class students might be more welcome than working- or lower-class students. This might especially be true in higher education because the sociocultural context of college and university campuses make their social class more salient and visible for students (Jones & McEwen, 2000). This increased visibility of social class in the lives of students can occur due to a variety of differences they bring, such as social capital (e.g., social and professional networks), cultural capital (e.g., vacations abroad, quality of previous education and volunteer work, and clothing), and emotional capital (e.g., emotional resources, expression of affect, and ability to present with affect that is culturally normative; Zembylas, 2007). Consequently, the college context influences identities and psychological experiences of students from different social class backgrounds in different ways.

Studies conducted among college samples have demonstrated that coming from a lower-class background leads to feelings of social incompetency, isolation, inadequacy, discomfort, deficiency, and powerlessness (Aries & Seider, 2005). Furthermore, low-SES/working-class students studying law in a prestigious school reported anxiety related to academic inadequacy, lack of cultural capital, feelings of alienation, shame from the lower status of their significant other, and guilt associated with upward class mobility, along with experiencing class-based stigmatization (Granfield, 1991).

Similarly, Langhout, Rosselli, and Feinstein (2007) found that students with less economic, cultural, and social capital experienced more citational classism (i.e., making

stereotypical and disparaging jokes about poor people in terms of how they dress, act, or speak), institutionalized classism (classism due to organizational structures, policies, and procedures, such as being unable to take a course because of fees), and interpersonal classism (i.e., intentional dismissal of one's social class, such as not acknowledging a financial burden or offering to go to an expensive restaurant for lunch). Furthermore, experiences with classism were significantly related to a lack of a sense of belonging; lower levels of social adjustment and well-being; and higher levels of anxiety, depression, and life stress (Langhout, Drake, & Rosselli, 2009). Moreover, another study demonstrated that most of these outcomes, including experiencing classism, lack of a sense of belonging, and lower social and academic adjustment were more strongly predicted by subjective social class background than by objective social class background (Ostrove & Long, 2007).

Taken together, in alignment with theoretical arguments provided by the reflected appraisals model and critical consciousness framework, empirical findings consistently provide evidence for the negative effects of social class on psychological and social experiences, identities, self-esteem, and the SWB of students from lower social class backgrounds. However, despite the importance of social class on the psychosocial experiences and self-concept of students in higher education, researchers have paid limited attention to the effects of social class on university and college students (Walpole, 2013). This study sought out to fill this gap in literature by examining how social class, particularly subjective social class, influences psychological outcomes of self-esteem, satisfaction with life, positive affect, and negative affect for students.

Summary of the Problem

This chapter provided a detailed review of social class, its importance in psychological research, and the methodological issues of the study of social class. Despite its essential role in shaping identity, development, and behavior and influencing mental health and SWB, there is still a growing need to explore social class and its relationships between various psychological processes and outcomes. More specifically, there is a need to explore these relationships by testing social class as a psychological variable and with subjective measures that have strong theoretical foundations, given that it has mostly been treated as a demographic variable and assessed with objective indicators.

One area of focus that needs further systematic exploration is the relationship between social class and SWB. A comprehensive discussion of the literature provided evidence that social class has important implications for SWB. However, this line of study presents two important limitations: (1) utilization of mostly simple correlational designs, which does not allow for an in-depth understanding of the complexity of this relationship, and (2) measurement of social class with objective indicators. In order to address these limitations, the present study intends to examine the complex mechanisms of how *subjective* social class influences SWB. A review of both empirical findings and theoretical frameworks showed that social class shapes self-esteem and self-esteem influences SWB. Thus, it is suggested that one mechanism social class might predict SWB would be through the mediating effect of self-esteem, such that higher social class status will lead to higher self-esteem, which then will have positive consequences on SWB.

Furthermore, this study also discussed critical consciousness and how it might insulate one from the negative consequences of low social class on self-esteem. In other words, a higher level of critical consciousness is suggested to serve as a protective factor for individuals from lower social class backgrounds in maintaining a more positive self-concept. Thus, this study suggests that the moderating effect of critical consciousness will determine the indirect effect of social class on SWB through self-esteem. Finally given the need to understand the role of social class in affecting the psychosocial experiences, self-esteem, mental health, and overall SWB of students in higher education, this study utilizes a college sample.

To conclude, this study seeks to develop an understanding of the processes of how subjective social class might influence self-esteem and SWB, specifically among college students, by utilizing a moderated mediation method. It aims at filling the gaps in the literature by using a sophisticated methodology that allows for the systematic exploration of the relationships between these constructs and treating social class as a psychological variable.

To this end, this study asks the following research questions:

- 1) Is the relationship between *subjective* social class (SSC) and subjective well-being mediated by self-esteem?
- 2) Is the mediated effect of SSC on SWB through self-esteem moderated by critical consciousness?

To answer these questions, this study investigates the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. It is expected that self-esteem will mediate the relationship between SSC and SWB. In other words, SSC will have an indirect effect on SWB through self-esteem. Specifically, all these variables will be positively related to one another.

Hypothesis 2. It is expected that critical consciousness will moderate the indirect effect of SSC on SWB through self-esteem. That is, the indirect effect of SSC on SWB through self-esteem will be contingent upon the value of critical consciousness. Particularly, a higher level of critical consciousness will buffer the negative effects of low social class on self-esteem. Figure 1 below depicts the proposed hypothetical model.

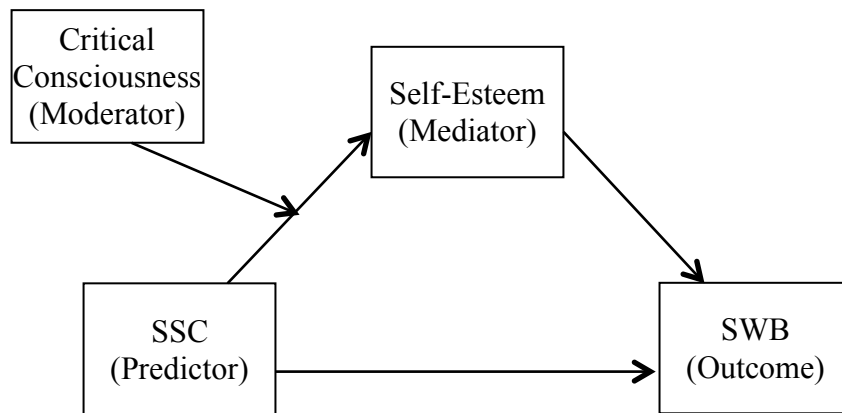


Figure 1. The Hypothetical Model

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

This chapter includes the following sections: sample description, data collection procedure, psychometric properties of all instruments, and data analytic methods.

Participants

Data were collected from students who were 18 years old or older and were an undergraduate or a graduate student at a college or a university in the United States of America. After removing all the participants who started the survey but did not complete it and who completed it markedly faster than a reasonable amount of time, 286 participants were included in the original data set. Among these 286 participants, a total of eleven were removed due to not disclosing their ages ($N = 4$), being under 18 years old ($N = 2$), or not disclosing their year in school ($N = 5$), all of which violated the eligibility criteria. The final sample consisted of 275 participants. Fritz and MacKinnon (2007) provided guidelines for appropriate sample sizes to detect a medium-size effect for a .80 power, based on the effect sizes of the predictor-mediator (α) and the mediator-outcome (β) relationships existing in the literature. Based on small to slightly moderate α (ranging from $r = .10 - .33$) and large β ($r = .59$) values, it was determined that the 252 participants would be sufficient to have adequate power to detect a significant mediated effect.

The sample consisted of 191 females (69.5%), 83 males (30.2%), and 1 other with

Table 1. Sample Demographic Characteristics

	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18–22	111	40.4
23–29	118	42.9
30–39	31	11.3
40+	15	5.5
Gender		
Female	191	69.5
Male	83	30.2
Other	1	0.4
Race/Ethnicity		
Hispanic American	52	18.9
African American/Black	24	8.7
European American/White	138	50.2
Asian American/Pacific Islander	29	10.5
Multiracial	14	5.1
Other	17	6.2
Year in School		
Freshman	54	19.6
Sophomore	48	17.5
Junior	25	9.1
Senior	25	9.1
Graduate	120	43.6
Other	3	1.1
Self-reported Social Class		
Lower class	29	10.5
Lower-middle class	97	35.3
Middle class	101	36.7
Upper-middle class	44	16.0
Upper class	4	1.5
Income		
Under \$ 20,000	81	29.5
20,000 to less than \$40,000	52	18.9
\$40,000 to less than \$60,000	50	18.2
\$60,000 to less than \$80,000	26	9.5
\$80,000 to less than \$100,000	19	6.9
\$100,000 to less than \$120,000	12	4.4
\$120,000 to less than \$140,000	11	4.0
\$140,000 to less than \$160,000	8	2.9
\$160,000 to less than \$180,000	2	0.7
\$180,000 to less than \$200,000	4	1.5
\$200,000 or more	7	2.5

Note: Total = 275

specification of genderqueer (.4%). The mean age of the sample was 25.26 (SD = 7.95, range = 18–72). As to the year in school, 54 (19.6%) participants were freshman, 48 (17.5%) were sophomore, 25 (9.1%) were junior, 25 (9.1%) were senior, and 120 (43.6%) were graduate students, with 3 (1.1%) choosing other with specification of “super senior and non-traditional.” Select demographic characteristics of the final sample are presented in Table 1.

Procedure

Data were collected online by using Opinio Survey Software. After the permission of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was granted, the web-based survey package was posted on various web pages (e.g., Craigslist) and the Facebook pages of various colleges, universities, and student organizations across the US. Recruitment emails were sent to special-interest online LISTSERVs (e.g. the American Psychological Association SES Network), Trio Programs, and Student Enrichment Services at several higher-education institutions, along with professional and personal connections. All recruitment scripts included a web-link directing the participants to the survey. The survey package consisted of the informed consent, a demographic questionnaire, and the following measures: Differential Identity Status Scale [DSIS], Satisfaction with Life Scale [SWLS], Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale [RSE], Critical Consciousness Scale [CCS], Critical Consciousness Inventory [CCI], and Positive and Negative Affect Scale [PANAS].

Participants were asked to read the informed consent as they reached the survey webpage and were told that their participation is voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time. No identifying information was gathered, and all data was kept

secure in a password-protected computer. As a token of appreciation, participants had the opportunity to enter a raffle to win one of sixteen \$25 Amazon gift cards at the end of the surveys. If they accepted, they were directed to a separate webpage to provide their names and email addresses to be contacted later if they won the raffle. Participants' names and contact information were not matched with their survey responses and were stored separately and were deleted after the gift cards were sent to the winners.

Instruments

Demographic Questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire consisted of questions about participants' age, their gender, their race/ethnicity, their year in school, their approximate household income before taxes, their self-reported social class, and the highest level of education both of their parents received.

Predictor: Social Class

The Differential Status Identity Scale. The Differential Status Identity Scale (DSIS) was developed by Brown et al. (2002) to measure perceived social status. As previously noted, it was based on Fouad and Brown's (2000) conceptual framework of DSI, which pertains to the social and psychological consequences of group belonging in the hierarchical structure of society (Thompson & Subich, 2007).

The DSIS was initially proposed to have three subscales: economic resources, social power, and social prestige. It includes a total of 60 items. The economic resources subscale consisted of 30 items, and the social power and social prestige subscales each consisted of 15 items. The results of the exploratory factor analysis conducted found a four-structure model to be more interpretable (Thompson & Subich, 2007). In addition to

supporting the existence of the social power and social prestige subscales, the results also showed that the economic resources subscale contained two different subscales, each consisting of 15 items. Thus, the scale was indicated to have four factors, all of which are measured by one subscale: Economic Resources Amenities (ER-A), Economic Resources Basic Needs (ER-B), Social Power (SPO), and Social Prestige (SPR).

Each item is rated on a 5-point scale, ranging from -2 (*very much below average* for the ER-A, ER-B, and SPO or *much less* for the SPR) to $+2$ (*very much above average* or *much more*). For data analysis purposes, scores were transformed to a 1–5 scale in the present study. Higher scores reflect higher subjective social class. In the original instructions of the DSIS, participants are asked to compare themselves to an “average citizen in the United States.” Given that undergraduate students, especially freshman and sophomore students, might still identify with and experience the conditions of the social class of their families, this study asked participants to compare themselves and their families to an average citizen/family in the United States. The ER-A subscale asks participants to assess their perceptions of their ability to engage in behaviors that require economic resources, such as the “ability to travel recreationally” or “go to the dentist.” The ER-B subscale asks what is available to participants (e.g., life insurance, cars). The SPO subscale asks participants’ ranking in the society and their perception of their ability to affect legal and social policies and various institutions. Finally, the SPR subscale asks how much participants feel valued in terms of their ethnic group, their physical abilities, and the neighborhood they live in.

The internal consistency reliability (alpha) for the total DSIS was .97, and it was .95, .95, .94, and .92 for the ER-A, ER-B, SPO, and SPR subscales, respectively.

Convergent evidence was established by exploring the correlations of the DSIS with more traditional/objective measures of social class, such as level of income in childhood or self-identified social class ($r = .32-.56$; Thompson & Subich, 2007). Correlations were significant enough to suggest that the DSIS assesses a related construct and were not high enough to prove the DSIS assesses a different construct.

In order to measure subjective social class, the present study utilized the total score of the DSIS, as well as the four subscale scores. The internal consistency estimate of the present sample was .98 for the DSIS, .94 for the ER-A, .95 for the ER-B, .96 for the SPO, and .93 for the SPR.

Moderator: Critical Consciousness

The Critical Consciousness Scale. The Critical Consciousness Scale (CCS; Diemer et al., 2014) was developed to provide a unifying and advancing conceptualization and assessment of critical consciousness. It was developed and validated with predominantly working-class and poor African-American-identified youth and was intended for use with both youth and adult populations. The CCS has three subscales with three corresponding factors: (1) Critical Reflection: Perceived Inequality (CRPI), (2) Critical Reflection: Egalitarianism (CRE), and (3) Critical Action: Sociopolitical Participation (CA).

Participants are asked to respond to both Critical Reflection subscale items on a 6-point scale (1 = *Strongly disagree* and 6 = *Strongly agree*). The CRPI subscale consists of eight items that assess a youth's critical analysis of socioeconomic, racial and ethnic, and gendered restrictions on educational and occupational opportunities. The CRE subscale consists of five items that assess a youth's support for social equality, or the equal

treatment for all groups of people within a society. The CA subscale consists of nine items and is measured on a 5-point behavioral frequency to the Critical Action subscale items (1 = *Never did this*, 2 = *Once or twice the last year*, 3 = *Once every few months*, 4 = *At least once a month*, and 5 = *At least once a week*). It measures involvement in social and political activity to change the perceived inequalities in a society. The three subscales were shown to have strong internal consistencies. The internal consistency reliability (alpha) of CRPI was .90, of CRE was .88, and of CA was .85. Results of the development and validation studies indicated that the two subscales of Critical Reflection did not significantly correlate with each other and that CRPI correlated significantly with CA. Based on this limited association between factors, the authors suggested that the total scores for the CCS should not be computed. This study utilized only the CRPI subscale scores of the CCS.

The Critical Consciousness Inventory. The Critical Consciousness Inventory (CCI; Thomas et al., 2014) is also a recently developed 9-item Guttman-type scale measuring critical consciousness. It was developed and validated with a diverse sample of college students from two Midwestern universities, one a predominantly White institution and the other a Historically Black College/University. It was primarily developed as an assessment tool that determines individuals' levels of critical consciousness for prevention and clinical work. The authors also suggested the use of the scale for research purposes. Scores on the CCI are intended to place the individuals in one of the following stages: precritical, beginning critical, critical, and postcritical. In the precritical stage individuals lack awareness of the inequality of the distribution of resources and injustice. The beginning or critical awareness stage is characterized by the

awareness and acceptance of inequality; however, individuals in this stage use strategies to justify those inequalities. In the critical consciousness stage, individuals have a more sophisticated understanding of oppression than they have in the beginning stage. Finally, in the postcritical stage, they engage in the transformation of society by taking social action to eliminate oppression.

Each item on the CCI includes 4 sentence options representing different levels of critical consciousness. For example, the first item includes the following sentences: “I believe that the world is basically fair,” for the precritical stage; “I believe that the world is basically fair but others believe that it is unfair,” for the beginning critical stage; “I believe that the world is unfair for some people,” for the critical stage; and, “I believe that the world is unfair, and I make sure to treat others fairly,” for the postcritical stage. Individuals are asked to choose the sentence that best represents them even though there may be more than one choice they agree with on a variety of situations. The reliability was 0.61 for persons and 0.87 for the items (Cronbach’s alpha). In the current study, participants’ responses to the CCI were transformed into a 4-point scale. For each item, the first sentence (precritical) equals a score of “1,” second sentence (beginning critical) = 2, third sentence (beginning critical) = 3, fourth sentence = 4. This study did not place participants into different stages categorically but acted on the assumption that higher scores indicated higher levels of critical consciousness.

In order to provide a comprehensive conceptualization of critical consciousness development, this study used both the CCI and CRPI subscale of the CCS. A composite score of the two of these scales was computed to determine a final score to assess critical

consciousness. From hereon, I will refer to this composite score as critical consciousness (CC). The internal consistency estimate of CC in the present sample was .92.

Mediator: Self-Esteem

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE; Rosenberg, 1965) is a widely implemented 10-item self-reported scale used to assess global self-esteem. Sample items include: “I feel that I have a number of good qualities,” “I take a positive attitude toward myself,” and, “I certainly feel useless at times.” Participants are asked to rate each item on a 4-point scale (1 = *strongly agree*, and 4 = *strongly disagree*). Total scores range from 10 to 40. In the present study, appropriate items were reverse scored (items 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7). Higher scores indicate higher evaluations of self-worth. Internal consistency coefficients were reported to range from .77 to .88 (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991). Test-retest reliability with a two-week interval was .85 (Silber & Tippett, 1965) and with one-year interval was .74 (McCarthy & Hoge, 1982). Additionally, convergent validity evidence was demonstrated by examining the correlations between the RSE and other measures of self-esteem-related constructs (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991). The internal consistency estimate of RSE in the present sample was .89.

Outcome: Subjective Well-being

The Satisfaction With Life Scale. The Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) is a short, 5-item instrument assessing global cognitive judgments of one’s satisfaction with one’s life. Participants are asked to rate their levels of agreement with the items on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include: “The conditions of my life are excellent,” and, “I am satisfied with

my life.” Total scores range from 5 to 35, and high scores indicate higher satisfaction. In the initial development study, the test-retest (2 month-interval) reliability was reported to be .87 (alpha). Convergent validity was established with moderate to strong correlations ($r = .32-.75$) between the SWLS and other measures of SWB and some personality measures. The internal consistency estimate in the present sample was .89.

The Positive and Negative Affect Scale. The Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988) is a self-report measure consisting of 20 items. It has two mood scales assessing positive affect (PA) and negative affect (NA). Each scale has 10 items. Each item is rated on a 5-point scale (1 = *very slightly or not at all* to 5 = *extremely*) to indicate to what extent the person feels in general. Total scores for each scale range from 10 to 50. Reliability scores were .88 for PA and .87 for NA (alpha), and test-retest reliabilities (8-week period) were .68 for PA and .71 for NA. Supporting convergent and discriminant validity, PA was negatively correlated with depression, and NA was positively correlated with psychological distress. The Cronbach’s alphas were .89 for PA and .90 for NA in the present sample.

Data Analysis

Preliminary Analysis

The missing data were analyzed with the expectation maximization (EM) method. There are different criteria to handle the missing values, and the most common one is to consider a missing value as random if the total number of missing values is less than 20% for a scale. In the current data set, the percentages of missing values for all the variables, except total DSIS, ranged from 1.1%–3.6%, and for the DSIS it was 9.8%. Thus, all missing items were considered as random, as they were all less than 20%. However,

following a more stringent criterion of 5%, missing values were also examined at the item level for the DSIS. Because the percentages of missing items on the DSIS was less than 5%, they were also considered as random, and no cases were deleted from the sample. After missing-value analysis was completed, all missing data was replaced at the item level for all scales by using the mean substitution method. In preparing the final data set, total scores of all the variables were re-computed. This was followed by an examination of outliers using boxplots, and no cases were deleted based on this examination.

After the data were cleaned, each scale and subscale was analyzed to ensure normality, homoscedasticity, and linearity. Analyses of the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis of each variable (values are reported in the next chapter) and the exploration of histograms, P-plot, and scatter plots provided evidence for normality, homoscedasticity, and linearity. For these reasons, bivariate correlations between all the variables were reported as Pearson r values. Furthermore, collinearity diagnostics were run to test multicollinearity, and results were within satisfactory range.

Correlational analyses were conducted between all major study variables to explore if there were any statistically significant relationships between these variables.

Main Analysis

Hypothesis 1: Self-esteem as a mediator. The first hypothesis of this study is that self-esteem would mediate the relationship between subjective social class and SWB. Figure 2 presents a graphic representation of the model that tests this hypothesis. To test the mediated effects, simple mediation analysis, which uses ordinary least squares path analysis, was conducted with the SPSS PROCESS macro (v2 16; Hayes, 2016).

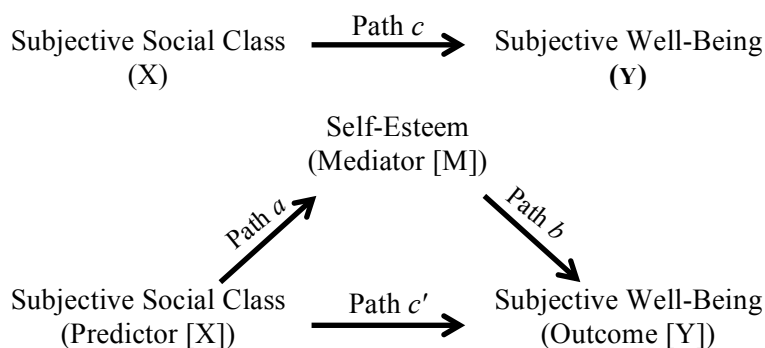


Figure 2. A representation of the mediation model.

Baron and Kenny (1986) suggested that, in order for a mediation effect to occur, there are pre-existing conditions that need to be met: (1) the predictor variable, X (i.e., SSC), must be significantly related to the outcome variable, Y (i.e., SWB). This relationship is indicated in the model as “path *c*.” Path *c* represents the “total effect” of X on Y, which is the sum of the direct path of X to Y without passing M (i.e., self-esteem) and the indirect path of X to Y passing through M. (2) The predictor variable (i.e. SSC), must be significantly related to the proposed mediator, M (i.e., self-esteem). This relationship is indicated in the model as “path *a*.” (3) The proposed mediator (i.e., self-esteem) must be significantly related to the outcome variable (i.e., SWB) after controlling for the effect of the predictor variable (i.e., SSC) on the outcome variable (i.e., SWB). This relationship is indicated in the model as “path *b*.”

According to the causal steps approach, if any of these conditions are not met, the procedure stops. However, once these pre-existing conditions have been met, the next step is to determine the value of the path by which X leads to Y without passing through the mediator. In other words, it determines if there is still a significant influence of SSC on SWB, independent from its effect on self-esteem. This path is represented in the

model as “path c' ” and called the “direct effect.” The mediation effect is then estimated by comparing the direct effect (c') to the total effect (c), and it occurs only if $c' < c$. If $c' = 0$ or is closer to zero than c , then c' is not statistically significant. This suggests that the mediator (i.e., self-esteem) mediates the relationship between the predictor (i.e., SSC) and outcome (i.e., SWB) *completely*, and this is called “full mediation.” If, however, c' is closer to zero than c but is still significantly different from zero, then this suggests that the mediator *partially* mediates the influence of predictor on the outcome.

Hayes (2013) has discussed the limitations of the causal steps approach. First, he suggested that the causal steps approach does not formally quantify the indirect effect and does not necessitate an inferential test about it. He argued that, in the causal steps approach, the existence of an indirect effect is “logically inferred” from a series of null hypotheses that do not quantify the indirect effect itself (p. 167). He proposed that researchers should make inferences about the indirect effects based on numerical estimates of the indirect effects themselves, and then an inferential test should examine if they are different from zero. Hayes noted that the indirect effect is defined in two ways, both as the product of the coefficients of paths a and b (ab) and as the difference between the path coefficients of the total effect and direct effect (c minus c'). Second, Hayes proposed that, in an empirical test of a causal process that includes a mediation element, the main focus is in the estimation and interpretation of the direct and indirect effects and their inferential tests. Even though “the constituent components of the indirect effect,” which are the effect of X on M and the effect of M on Y (paths a & b), are calculated, these constituent elements of the indirect effect are not of main interest in contemporary mediation analysis (p. 90). As such, unlike the causal steps approach, pre-existing

statistically significant relationships between a predictor and outcome (path c), predictor and mediator (path a), and mediator and outcome (path b) are not requirements for or a focus of mediation analysis (Hayes, 2013; Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Despite the fact that this study utilizes a mediation analysis from a more contemporary conceptualization, given the continued application of Baron and Kenney's causal steps approach in mediation analysis, this study still required pre-existing statistically significant correlations between X and Y , M and Y , and X and M in order for a mediation analysis to be performed. This requirement allows for parsimony, given the number of measured variables of both predictor (5 for SSC) and outcome (3 for SWB) variables in the present study. To determine the significance of these relationships, the results of the preliminary correlational analyses were utilized. Therefore, mediation analyses were only performed (a) if the predictor (SSC) was significantly related to the outcome (SWB), (b) if the mediator (self-esteem) was significantly related to the outcome (SWB), and (c) if the predictor (SSC) was significantly related to the mediator (self-esteem).

To determine the indirect effect (also referred as the "mediated effect"), the total, direct, and indirect effects (i.e., ab and c minus c'), as well as their inferential tests, are reported. The significance of the indirect effect is determined via bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals with 5,000 resamples. Bootstrapping is a resampling method in which the original sample is assumed to be a small-scale representation of the population (Hayes, 2013). It estimates the sampling distribution of the indirect effect through bootstrapping multiple resamples (a minimum of a thousand) of the data set. Bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals are utilized as an inferential test. If the

confidence intervals of the indirect effect cross zero, this would suggest that there is no indirect effect, and we would thus fail to reject the null hypothesis. If confidence intervals do not cross zero, thus were entirely above or below zero, it would mean that there is an indirect effect. It has been suggested that using bootstrapped confidence intervals has several advantages over some other inferential tests, such as the normal theory test, including its ability to produce higher power and not requiring a normal sample distribution (Hayes, 2013; Preacher et al., 2007).

Given that it is recommended to report more than one effect size, Preacher and Kelley's (2011) kappa-squared index (κ^2) is also reported in addition to the unstandardized indirect effects. Hayes (2013) discussed that most of the indices of indirect effect size interpret it according to its distance from zero, such that an effect is considered small if it is close to zero, and it becomes larger as it moves further away. He, however, argued that the size of an effect is relative and could be explained by comparing it to another reference, which would determine its interpretation as small or large. Thus, he suggests the use of κ^2 , which is the ratio to the largest possible indirect effect that could have been observed in a data set, if the constituent path coefficients were as large as the model design and data allow for (Preacher & Kelley, 2011).

Hypothesis 2: Critical consciousness as a moderator. The second hypothesis of this study is that critical consciousness would moderate the indirect effect (i.e., mediated effect) of subjective social class on SWB through self-esteem. In other words, the indirect effect of subjective social class on SWB through self-esteem would be conditional upon the value of critical consciousness. This is called a conditional indirect effect (Preacher et

al., 2007), and conditional indirect effects are analyzed with moderated mediation models.

Researchers have used different statistical methods to test moderated mediation. Among these methods are a piecemeal approach, where researchers analyze mediation and moderation separately and then interpret the results together to explain the combined effects of moderation and mediation, and the causal steps approach (Baron & Kenny, 1986), where it is determined if a moderator effect is still significant after controlling for a mediator variable (Edward & Lambert, 2007). It was suggested that these models pose various limitations, including low power and inability to capture the complex conditional indirect effects via simple mediation effects (for a detailed review see Preacher et al., 2007 and Edward & Lambert, 2007).

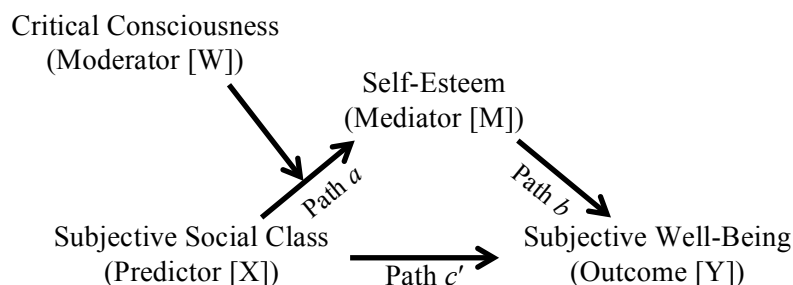


Figure 3. A representation of the moderated mediation model.

For these reasons, to test the second hypothesis, this study utilized a moderated mediation model developed by Preacher and his colleagues, who identified five primary models to test conditional indirect effects (see Preacher et al., 2007 for a full list). The hypothesis of the present study fits with the model described in Figure 3. As can be seen, the moderator is introduced into the same mediation model depicted in Figure 2.

Conditional indirect effects were also tested with SPSS PROCESS, using conditional process analysis. Conditional process modeling combines the moderation and mediation analyses into one single theoretical model and tests the mediated effect (i.e., indirect effect) across various levels of the moderator (Hayes, 2013).

In the present study, the predictor (SSC variables) and moderator (critical consciousness) variables were mean-centered. The indirect effect of subjective social class on SWB through self-esteem was calculated at three conditional levels of critical consciousness—that is, the mean and ± 1 SD from the mean, representing low, moderate, and high levels of critical consciousness. The conditional indirect effect, symbolized as “ ω ,” is quantified as $b(a_1 + a_3 \times W)$, where $a_3 = X \times W$. Many researchers have advocated for a pre-existing moderation of at least one path in a mediation model (i.e., a or b) in order to test a conditional indirect effect. However, Hayes (2015) proposed that this need not be a requirement for models where the relationship between the indirect effect and the moderator is linear, and he introduced an inferential test—an index of moderated mediation—to decide if the hypothesis of moderated mediation is substantiated. The present study utilized this index of moderated mediation to test the second hypothesis and determine if the three conditional indirect effects are statistically significant from each other based on bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals with 5,000 resamples.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This chapter includes three sections: (1) preliminary analyses that describe the results of the tests of normality and the correlations between major study variables, (2) main analyses where the results of the mediation and moderated mediation analyses are reported, and (3) a summary of the main results.

Preliminary Analysis

The results of normality tests are provided, even though PROCESS does not operate on the normality assumption. Table 2 demonstrates the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis for all major study variables. All variables had satisfactory skewness and kurtosis values (skew < 2 , kurtosis < 7), and they met the normality assumption. Therefore, the data was not transformed to produce normality, and all study variables were included in the subsequent analyses.

Correlations

Zero-order correlations for all the major study variables are reported in Table 2.

Correlations between SSC and SWB variables. The results were mixed with regards to the correlations between subjective social class and SWB variables. As expected, the total DSIS scores and all SSC subscale scores (ER-A, ER-B, SPO, and SPR) were significantly and positively related to satisfaction with life with moderate to large correlations, ranging from .37 to .43, and significantly and negatively related to

Table 2. Correlation Matrix, Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness, and Kurtosis for Major Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Subjective Social Class (X)										
1. DSIS Total	1									
2. ER– Amenities	.939**	1								
3. ER–Basic Needs	.952**	.895**	1							
4. Social Power	.911**	.799**	.827**	1						
5. Social Prestige	.870**	.733**	.770**	.723**	1					
6. Critical Consciousness (W)	-.054	-.044	-.017	-.087	-.054	1				
7. Self–Esteem (M)	.115	.091	.082	.120*	.135*	-.030	1			
Subjective Well-being (Y)										
8. Satisfaction with Life	.431**	.387**	.418**	.369**	.409**	.089	.446**	1		
9. Positive Affect	.083	.080	.073	.078	.068	.006	.489**	.296**	1	
10. Negative Affect	-.201**	-.184**	-.156**	-.155*	-.251**	.179**	-.476**	-.326**	-.155**	1
Mean	169.94	42.58	43.24	39.53	46.97	62.21	30.56	20.43	34.75	26.53
SD	46.79	14.21	12.66	13.35	11.52	12.33	6.25	7.44	7.44	8.51
Skewness	.043	.123	.093	.027	-.115	-.515	-.512	-.252	-.399	.221
Kurtosis	-.615	-.762	-.648	-.657	-.120	.081	-.017	-.575	.476	-.382

Note. N = 275. * $p < .05$, two-tailed. ** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

negative affect with small to slightly moderate correlations, ranging from $-.16$ to $-.25$. Contrary to expectations, none of the SSC variables indicated significant relationships with positive affect. Overall, all aspects of SSC were significantly related to satisfaction with life and negative affect in the expected direction, whereas none of those aspects were associated with positive affect.

Correlations between SSC variables and self-esteem. The results of the correlational analyses between SSC variables and self-esteem were also mixed. Contrary to expectations, there were no significant relationships between self-esteem and the following SSC variables: total DSIS scores, ER-A, and ER-B. However, as expected, there were significant, positive, small correlations between self-esteem and SPO ($r = .12$, $p < .05$) and self-esteem and SPR ($r = .14$, $p < .05$). Thus, the results showed that the economic resources aspect of subjective social class was not linked with self-esteem, whereas social power and social prestige were related to self-esteem.

Correlations between self-esteem and SWB variables. As anticipated, relationships between self-esteem and all SWB variables were statistically significant with large correlation values: satisfaction with life ($r = .45$, $p < .01$), positive affect ($r = .49$, $p < .01$), and negative affect ($r = -.48$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, all the variables of SWB were significantly correlated among each other with small to moderate correlations, ranging from $.16$ to $.33$.

Overall, the results showed that none of the subjective social class variables were related to positive affect, whereas all of those variables were significantly related to satisfaction with life and negative affect, and in the expected direction. However, only social power and social prestige were significantly related to self-esteem. For these

reasons, only the following variables were entered in the main analyses: social power and social prestige for predictor, satisfaction with life and negative affect for outcome, self-esteem for mediator, and critical consciousness for moderator.

Main Analysis

Mediation Analyses

A series of four mediation analyses were performed to test if subjective social class has an indirect effect on SWB through self-esteem—that is, if self-esteem mediates the relationship between social class and SWB.

1. Indirect effect of social power on satisfaction with life. A simple mediation analysis showed that social power is indirectly related to satisfaction with life through self-esteem. As can be seen in Table 4, participants with higher perceived social power indicated higher self-esteem ($a = .056, p < .05$), and participants who had higher self-esteem reported higher satisfaction with their lives ($b = .486, p < .001$). A bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for this indirect effect ($ab = .027$) did not include zero and was entirely above zero based on 5,000 bootstrap samples ($CI_{BC} = .0024$ to $.0588$). The κ^2 (kappa squared) effect size showed that this indirect effect is around 5% of its maximum value possible, with bootstrapped confidence intervals above zero. Results showed that social power also had a direct effect on satisfaction with life independently of self-esteem

Table 3. Indirect Effect of SPO→SWLS

	Effect	SE _{BC}	95% CI _{BC}
Indirect	.027	.014	.0024, .0588
κ^2	.052	.026	.0077, .1107

Notes. SE = Standard error. CI = Confidence intervals.
BC = Bias-corrected bootstrapped

Table 4. Model Coefficients for the Indirect Effects of Social Power on SWB Variables

	Self-Esteem (<i>M</i>)			Satisfaction with life (<i>Y₁</i>)			Negative Affect (<i>Y₂</i>)		
	Coefficient	95% CI		Coefficient	95% CI		Coefficient	95% CI	
Social Power (<i>X</i>)	<i>a</i> .056* (.028)	.0008, .1115	<i>c'</i> .179*** (.029)	.1226, .2348	<i>c'</i> -.063 ⁺ (.034)	-.1300, .0040			
Self-Esteem	---	---	<i>b</i> .486*** (.061)	.3660, .6056	<i>b</i> -.632*** (.073)	-.7755, -.4893			
	$R^2 = .014$ $F(1, 273) = 3.987, p < .05$			$R^2 = .300$ $F(2, 272) = 58.352, p < .001$			$R^2 = .237$ $F(2, 272) = 42.126, p < .001$		
Social Power (<i>X</i>)	<i>c</i> .206*** (.031)	.1442, .2678	<i>c</i> -.099* (.038)	-.1736, -.0235					

Table 5. Model Coefficients for the Indirect Effects of Social Prestige on SWB Variables

	Self-Esteem (<i>M</i>)			Satisfaction with life (<i>Y₁</i>)			Negative Affect (<i>Y₂</i>)		
	Coefficient	95% CI		Coefficient	95% CI		Coefficient	95% CI	
Social Prestige (<i>X</i>)	<i>a</i> .073* (.033)	.0089, .1369	<i>c'</i> .230*** (.033)	.1659, .2939	<i>c'</i> -.141** (.039)	-.2170, -.0643			
Self-Esteem	---	---	<i>b</i> .475*** (.060)	.3565, .5926	<i>b</i> -.614*** (.072)	-.7545, -.4728			
	$R^2 = .018$ $F(1, 273) = 5.031, p < .05$			$R^2 = .323$ $F(2, 272) = 65.017, p < .001$			$R^2 = .263$ $F(2, 272) = 48.409, p < .001$		
Social Prestige (<i>X</i>)	<i>c</i> .265*** (.036)	.1943, .3348	<i>c</i> -.185*** (.043)	-.2705, -.1003					

Notes. *a*, *b*, *c*, and *c'* are unstandardized regression coefficients (standard errors in parentheses). *** $p < .001$, two-tailed. ⁺ $p < .09$, two-tailed.

($c' = .179, p < .001$). Thus, there is evidence that self-esteem is functioning as a partial mediator for the effect of social power on satisfaction with life.

2. Indirect effect of social power on negative affect. A simple mediation analysis revealed that social power is also indirectly related to negative affect through self-esteem and in the expected direction. As can be seen in Table 4, participants who reported higher social power also reported higher self-esteem, and participants who reported higher self-esteem had lower levels of negative affect ($b = -.632, p < .001$), suggesting an indirect effect. A bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect ($ab = -.036$) did not include zero and was entirely below zero ($CI_{BC} = -.0755$ to $-.0023$). Furthermore, the κ^2 effect size showed that the indirect effect of social power on negative affect through self-esteem is 6% of its maximum value possible, with bootstrapped confidence intervals above zero. Results showed that social power does not have a direct effect on negative affect independently of self-esteem ($c' = -.063, CI = -.1300, .0040, p = .065$), although the majority of the confidence interval was in the expected direction and the significance level was slightly higher. Therefore, evidence suggests that self-esteem is functioning as a mediator, most likely a full mediator, for the relation between social power and negative affect.

Table 6. Indirect Effect of SPO→NA

	Effect	SE _{BC}	95% CI _{BC}
Indirect	-.036	.018	-.0755, -.0023
κ^2	.059	.029	.0090, .1263

3. Indirect effect of social prestige on satisfaction with life. Based on the mediation analysis, social prestige has an indirect effect on satisfaction with life through

self-esteem. From Table 5, it can be concluded that participants who reported having higher social prestige also had higher self-esteem ($a = .073, p < .05$), and participants who had higher self-esteem reported higher satisfaction with their lives ($b = .475, p < .001$). The bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect ($ab = .035$) did not include zero and was entirely above zero ($CI_{BC} = .0009$ to $.0732$). The κ^2 effect size indicated that the indirect effect of social prestige on satisfaction with life through self-esteem is 6% of its maximum value possible, with bootstrapped confidence intervals above zero. Additionally, social prestige is directly related to satisfaction with life independently of its effect on self-esteem ($c' = .230, p < .001$). Taken together, it can be concluded that self-esteem serves as a partial mediator for the effect of social prestige on satisfaction with life.

Table 7. Indirect Effect of SPR→SWLS

	Effect	SE _{BC}	95% CI _{BC}
Indirect	.035	.018	.0009, .0732
κ^2	.058	.030	.0064, .1208

4. Indirect effect of social prestige on negative affect. Results indicated that social prestige has an indirect effect on negative affect through its effect on self-esteem and in the anticipated direction. As stated above, participants who had higher social prestige also had higher self-esteem, and moreover, participants who had higher self-esteem reported lower levels of negative affect ($b = -.614, p < .001$). Bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals for this indirect effect ($ab = -.045$) did not contain zero and were entirely below zero ($CI_{BC} = -.0947$ to $-.0011$). The κ^2 effect size showed the indirect effect of social prestige on negative affect through self-esteem is over 6% of its maximum value possible,

with bootstrapped confidence intervals also above zero. On Table 5, it can be seen that, in addition to its indirect effect on negative affect, social prestige is also directly related to negative affect independently of its effect on self-esteem ($c' = -.141, p < .01$). Therefore, there is evidence to suggest that self-esteem functions as a partial mediator for the effect of social prestige on negative affect.

Table 8. Indirect Effect of SPR→NA

	Effect	SE _{BC}	95% CI _{BC}
Indirect	-.045	.024	-.0947, -.0011
κ^2	.064	.033	.0070, .1327

Moderated Mediation Analyses

A series of four moderated mediation analyses were conducted to test the second hypothesis of this study, that is, that the indirect effect of SSC on SWB through self-esteem is conditional on the value of critical consciousness.

A. Conditional indirect effects of social power on satisfaction with life and on negative affect. Table 9 provides the results of conditional process analyses for components of the two separate moderated mediation models (SPO→SWLS and SPO→NA). As previously indicated, social power is directly related to satisfaction with life independently of its effect on self-esteem ($c' = .179, p < .001$), and self-esteem is also related to satisfaction with life ($b = .486, p < .001$). As for negative affect, evidence suggested that social power is not directly related to negative affect to a statistically significant degree ($c' = -.063, CI = -.1326, .0065, p = .076$), although the bulk of the confidence interval was in the anticipated direction; however, self-esteem is related to negative affect ($b = -.632, p < .001$). In exploring the interaction effects, Table 9 shows

Table 9. Model Coefficients for the Conditional Indirect Effects of Social Power on SWB Variables

	Self-Esteem (M)		Satisfaction with life (Y ₁)		Negative Affect (Y ₂)	
	Coefficient	95% CI	Coefficient	95% CI	Coefficient	95% CI
Social Power (X)	a ₁ .051 ⁺ (.029)	-.0064, .1074	c' .179*** (.031)	.1182, .2393	c' -.063 ⁺ (.035)	-.1326, .0065
Self-Esteem	---	---	b .486*** (.070)	.3490, .6225	b -.632*** (.089)	-.8081, -.4567
Critical C. (W)	a ₂ -.013 (.034)	-.0805, .0550	---	---	---	---
XxW	a ₃ .002 (.003)	-.0029, .0070	---	---	---	---
	R ² = .018		R ² = .300		R ² = .237	
	F(3, 271) = 1.619, p = .19		F(2, 272) = 48.966, p < .001		F(2, 272) = 31.812, p < .001	

Table 10. Model Coefficients for the Conditional Indirect Effects of Social Prestige on SWB Variables

	Self-Esteem (M)		Satisfaction with life (Y ₁)		Negative Affect (Y ₂)	
	Coefficient	95% CI	Coefficient	95% CI	Coefficient	95% CI
Social Prestige (X)	a ₁ .068 ⁺ (.039)	-.0093, .1446	c' .230*** (.042)	.1480, .3118	c' -.141** (.048)	-.2348, -.0465
Self-Esteem	---	---	b .475*** (.065)	.3461, .6030	b -.614*** (.088)	-.7868, -.4405
Critical C. (W)	a ₂ -.011 (.035)	-.0791, .0575	---	---	---	---
XxW	a ₃ .002 (.003)	-.0039, .0088	---	---	---	---
	R ² = .023		R ² = .323		R ² = .263	
	F(3, 271) = 1.736, p = .16		F(2, 272) = 52.019, p < .001		F(2, 272) = 43.666, p < .001	

Note. a₁, a₂, and a₃ are unstandardized regression coefficients (standard errors in parentheses).

that social power was positively related to self-esteem, but this was slightly below statistical significance ($a_1 = .051$, $CI = -.0064, .1074$, $p = .08$), and critical consciousness was also not related to self-esteem ($a_2 = -.013$, $p = .71$). The test of the moderation of the effect of social power on self-esteem by critical consciousness produced a non-significant result ($a_3 = .002$, $p = .42$). Even though this interaction was not significant, as suggested by Hayes (2015), the indirect effects across different levels of critical consciousness were examined. As can be seen in Table 11, in sharp contrast to expectations, higher levels of critical consciousness strengthened the indirect effects of social power on satisfaction with life and negative affect through self-esteem, whereas low levels seemed to reduce it, thus buffering the negative effect of social power on self-esteem. However, these indirect effects at different levels of critical consciousness were not statistically significant from each other, as shown by the index of moderated mediation ($index\{SPO \rightarrow SWLS\} = .0010$, $CI_{BC} = -.0012, .0036$; $index\{SPO \rightarrow NA\} = -.0013$, $CI_{BC} = -.0047, .0014$). Because the confidence interval crossed zero, the conclusion is that the indirect effect of social power on satisfaction with life and negative affect through self-esteem is not contingent upon critical consciousness.

Table 11. Conditional Indirect effects of Social Power on SWLS & on NA

	Self-esteem (SPO→SWLS)			Self-esteem (SPO→NA)		
	ω	SE _{BC}	95% CI _{BC}	ω	SE _{BC}	95% CI _{BC}
Low CC	.012	.023	-.0343, .0576	-.016	.029	-.0726, .0427
Moderate CC	.025	.015	-.0011, .0564	-.032	.018	-.0701, .0023
High CC	.037	.018	.0038, .0761	-.048	.023	-.0968, -.0048

Note. ω = Indirect effect

B. Conditional indirect effects of social prestige on satisfaction with life and on negative affect. The results of the two separate conditional process analyses of the

moderated mediation models for $SPR \rightarrow SWLS$ and $SPR \rightarrow NA$ are presented in Table 10. As shown previously, social prestige was directly related to satisfaction with life, independent of its effect on self-esteem ($c' = .230, p < .001$), and self-esteem was also related to satisfaction with life ($b = .475, p < .001$). Similarly, social prestige was directly related to negative affect independently of self-esteem ($c' = -.141, p < .01$), and self-esteem also was related to negative affect ($b = -.614, p < .001$). As seen in Table 10, exploration of the interaction effect showed that, although social prestige was positively related to self-esteem, this could not reach statistical significance ($a_1 = .068, CI = -.0093, .1446, p = .08$), and critical consciousness was not associated with self-esteem ($a_2 = -.011, p = .76$) either. The test of the moderation of the effect of social prestige on self-esteem by critical consciousness did not yield a significant interaction effect ($a_3 = .002, p = .45$).

Table 12. Conditional Indirect effects of Social Prestige on SWLS & on NA

	Self-esteem (SPR→SWLS)			Self-esteem (SPR→NA)		
	ω	SE _{BC}	95% CI _{BC}	ω	SE _{BC}	95% CI _{BC}
Low CC	.018	.030	-.0477, .0735	-.023	.038	-.0937, .0539
Moderate CC	.032	.019	-.0036, .0720	-.042	.025	-.0930, .0035
High CC	.046	.021	.0083, .0915	-.060	.027	-.1168, -.0087

Table 12 shows that, contrary to expectations, higher critical consciousness also increased the indirect effect of social prestige on satisfaction with life and on negative affect through self-esteem, disproving a buffering effect for the negative effect of social prestige on self-esteem. Also, the indirect effect decreased progressively at moderate and low levels of critical consciousness. However, a formal inferential test of moderated mediation showed that these indirect effects were not significantly different between the

three levels of critical consciousness ($index\{SPR \rightarrow SWLS\} = .0012$, $CI_{BC} = -.0013$, $.0042$; $index\{SPR \rightarrow NA\} = -.0015$, $CI_{BC} = -.0053$, $.0017$). Given that the confidence intervals include zero, results suggest that the indirect effect of social prestige on satisfaction with life and negative affect through self-esteem are not a function of critical consciousness.

Summary of the Results

Hypothesis 1. Overall, results of the process analyses exploring the indirect effects demonstrated that particular dimensions of SSC are indirectly related to specific components of SWB through their associations with self-esteem and in the anticipated directions, as indicated by bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals. This provides support for the first hypothesis of this study and suggests that self-esteem functions as a mediator between SSC and SWB.

More specifically, results showed that both social power and social prestige are indirectly related to satisfaction with life and negative affect through self-esteem. Participants with higher perceived social power and higher perceived social prestige indicated higher self-esteem, and participants with higher self-esteem reported higher satisfaction with their lives and lower negative affect. Social power and social prestige also are also directly related to satisfaction with life independently of self-esteem. Additionally, social prestige is also directly related to negative affect, whereas social power does not seem to have a direct effect on negative affect independently of its influence on self-esteem. Therefore, these results suggest that self-esteem acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between social prestige and satisfaction with life, social

prestige and negative affect, and social power and satisfaction with life. Self-esteem is likely a full mediator in the relationship between social power and negative affect.

Furthermore, a closer examination of the sizes of path coefficients and indirect effects reveals that social prestige has stronger effects on self-esteem, satisfaction with life, and negative affect than does social power. Finally, the indirect effects of both social prestige and social power on negative affect through self-esteem are larger than their indirect effects on satisfaction with life.

Hypothesis 2. Overall, the results of the conditional process analyses showed that the indirect effects of social power and social prestige on satisfaction with life and negative affect through self-esteem are not conditional on the value of critical consciousness, as interpreted via the index of moderated mediation and bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals. Therefore, the second hypothesis of the present study is not supported. It is concluded that critical consciousness does not function as a moderator for the indirect effect of SSC on SWB through self-esteem, and it does not buffer the negative effects of low social class on self-esteem.

Despite the insignificant conditional indirect effects, it is important to note the surprising findings observed in the data. Tables 11 and 12 indicate, contrary to expectations, the size of the conditional indirect effects of social power and social prestige on satisfaction with life and negative affect through self-esteem were larger for participants with high critical consciousness than they were for participants with low to moderate critical consciousness. That is, participants who reported low social power and low social prestige had lower self-esteem, lower satisfaction with life, and higher negative affect to a greater degree if they were high on critical consciousness than

participants who reported low social power and low social prestige but had moderate to low critical consciousness. This denies a buffering effect of high critical consciousness and might in fact suggest an inverse moderating effect. Moreover, high critical consciousness produced the only conditional indirect effects that had confidence intervals that did not cross zero.

It should be emphasized that the *inverse* conditional indirect effects described above are not provided as interpretations of significant effects; they are intended to be informative and they are just conjectural. As previously stated, a formal inferential test of moderated mediation demonstrated that the conditional indirect effects of the high, moderate, and low levels of critical consciousness were not statistically different from each other. Potential implications of these results for practice and further research is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This chapter includes interpretations of the empirical findings in relation to the study hypotheses, the implications of the findings for clinical practice, the strengths and limitations of the study, and suggested directions for further research.

Preliminary Findings

This study examined the mechanisms by which subjective social class is related to subjective well-being indirectly through the mediating effect of self-esteem, and the moderating effect of critical consciousness, using a college sample.

The preliminary correlational results show that students who perceived themselves as of a higher social class (i.e., who had more economic resources, social power, and social prestige) reported higher satisfaction with their lives and lower negative affect than did students who perceived themselves as of a lower social class. This is consistent with previous research that has shown significant relations between social class and SWB among general and as well as college populations (e.g., Diener et al., 1995; Anderson et al., 2012; Allan, Garriott, & Keene, 2016). Surprisingly, however, the level of positive affect for students in this sample did not differ based on their social class. One possible explanation for this is that, while higher economic resources, social power, and social prestige may not necessarily increase students' positive affect, they might act as a protective shield (Aslund et al., 2009) against negative affect (which might

be created by the academic and social challenges of college), increasing high-social-class students' satisfaction with their lives but not increasing their experiences of positive affect. On the contrary, lower-social-class students might be experiencing higher negative affect and less satisfaction with their lives because they experience greater challenges in college due to their class status and do not possess the protective "status shields." Additionally, it also may be that that positive affect is much more determined by sources independent of social class, such as family cohesion or a happy romantic relationship. However, since these results are correlational, no causal inferences can be made.

Regarding the relationship between social class and self-esteem, the results showed that students with higher perceived social power and social prestige reported significantly higher self-esteem than students with lower social power and social prestige. This converges with previous findings (Twenge & Campbell, 2002; Lundberg & Kristenson, 2008; James & Amato, 2013; Varga et al., 2014). Nonetheless, the third element of social class, economic resources, was not linked with self-esteem. At first glance, this finding might seem contrary to expectations; however, it resembles the inconsistent relationships described in the literature between self-esteem and objective indicators of social class (e.g., income, education, and occupation) among different populations. Although this study assessed participants' *perceptions* of their economic resources, the economic resources subscale of the DSIS is the element that is qualitatively closest to objective indicators of social class. Therefore, these results might suggest that social power and social prestige might be more important for students' self-esteem in the context of a college campus than their economic resources. On the other hand, economic resources might be more salient, for example, in the lives of young adults who are not in

college, and they would evaluate their self-worth and be judged by others based on their economic resources more so than their college-student counterparts.

Moreover, as expected, all SWB variables were significantly correlated with one another, and all social class variables were significantly correlated amongst themselves, suggesting that students with higher economic resources also have higher social power and social prestige. Overall, because different dimensions of social class had differing relationships with self-esteem and components of SWB, these results also seem to support the multidimensional conceptualization of social class proposed in this study.

Finally, self-esteem was highly correlated with satisfaction with life ($r = .45$), negative affect ($r = -.48$), and positive affect ($r = .49$). This resembles previous findings among college samples (Diener & Diener, 1995; Schimmack & Diener, 2003) and reaffirms the critical relationship between self-esteem and SWB.

Main Findings

Hypothesis 1: Self-Esteem as a Mediator

The results of the mediation analyses showed that social power and social prestige are indirectly related to satisfaction with life and negative affect through self-esteem. Self-esteem acted as a partial mediator between social prestige and satisfaction with life and negative affect, and between social power and satisfaction with life, whereas it was a full mediator between social power and negative affect. Thus, the results supported the mediation hypothesis. That is, students with lower perceived social power and social prestige reported lower self-esteem, lower satisfaction with their lives, and higher negative affect than students with higher perceived social power and social prestige.

The theoretical frameworks presented earlier can provide insight into these results. The social salience model discusses the importance of contextual factors in influencing the saliency of social class for individuals and how much emphasis they will place on it to evaluate their self-worth (Twenge & Campbell, 2002). The DSI also posits that individuals compare themselves to others based on *visible* status differences (Fouad & Brown, 2002). Their perceptions of those comparisons shape how they view themselves and how they believe others view them, which eventually are internalized to form their sense of self.

Therefore, it is likely that students will compare themselves to their peers in terms of social prestige and social power to evaluate how important they are (Fouad & Brown, 2002), because these are the most visible dimensions of social class in daily college life. Lower-social-class students may compare themselves to their higher-social-class peers with regards to social-prestige factors, such as the clothes they wear, where and what they eat, where they have fun (Rossides, 1990, 1997), their ability to afford expensive hobbies, and the social and cultural capitals they bring (e.g., the type of high school they attended). These comparisons in return might lead to feelings of inferiority, inadequacy, and shame among lower-class students, both due to their own perceptions of themselves and their assumptions of how others perceive them, along with actual experiences of devaluation or humiliation (i.e., classism). Given that several daily opportunities exist for these comparisons and devaluing experiences to occur, these students are more likely to internalize those negative evaluations and have low self-esteem, which then leads to more negative evaluations of the conditions of their lives (i.e., lower satisfaction with life) and more experiences of negative affect. Additionally, social-group participation is another

important element of social prestige. Lower-social-class students might not engage in social activities on campus for a variety of reasons, such as the inability to afford them; avoidance of a potential exposure to class-based stigmatization; consequential feelings of shame, anxiety, and insufficiency; and lack of time due to working a job to meet financial needs.

On the contrary, higher-social-class students might be more likely to perceive themselves as more important due to having high social prestige, such as the ability to wear fashionable and expensive clothes, drive an expensive car, take vacations abroad, and be frequently involved in social activities on campus. They might also be more likely to have high social power, such as holding leadership positions in student organizations, influencing decision-making processes both systemically at school and among peers, and therefore having more control over their environment. These would positively affect their self-worth and the development of a more positive identity, leading to lower negative affect and higher satisfaction with their lives.

Consistent with these accounts, research has shown that lower-class students with less cultural, social, and economic capital are exposed to greater classism, which has been linked with lower well-being and higher levels of anxiety, depression, and life stress (Langhout et al., 2009), and that admiration, respect (i.e., social prestige), and engagement with leadership positions (i.e., social power) are significant predictors of SWB among college students (Anderson et al., 2012). Moreover, low- and middle-class students spent less time on social activities, were less likely to be members of Greek life and intramural sports teams, and were more likely to have a part-time job, which were associated with less satisfaction with academic and social life in college (Martin, 2012).

Taken together, low-social-class status (i.e., low social power and social prestige) might lead to low satisfaction with life and high negative affect due to exposure to classism, low social-group participation, and low engagement with leadership activities, which would lead to lower-social-class students feeling less worthy, limiting their social interactions (where they could potentially feel valued by others and recognize their abilities and strengths), and preventing the development of more positive self-attitude and self-esteem.

The fact that social power and social prestige were also directly linked to SWB and that self-esteem acted as a partial mediator suggests that there are other paths through which social class might influence SWB. For example, other studies have found that SSC has significant indirect effects on life satisfaction through classism (Allan et al., 2016) and social class is related to SWB indirectly through the sense of power, even after controlling for extraversion among college students (Anderson et al., 2012). These results echo the findings that have linked social class with sense of power and perceived control (Lachman & Weaver, 1998; Chen et al., 2002; Lundberg & Kristenson, 2008).

The practical implications of these findings and interpretations will be discussed below.

Hypothesis 2: Critical Consciousness as a Moderator

The results of the conditional process analyses did not provide support for the second hypothesis of this study. The indirect effects of social power and social prestige on satisfaction with life and negative affect through self-esteem were not contingent upon critical consciousness. Thus, critical consciousness did not moderate the indirect effect of SSC on SWB by buffering the negative effects of low social class on self-esteem.

This non-significant conditional indirect effect may be explained in a few ways.

First, the fact that critical consciousness did not moderate the indirect effect of social class on SWB through self-esteem might be because having higher critical consciousness in one domain of oppression may not necessarily reflect higher critical consciousness in other domains. This study assessed critical reflection and critical action at the interpersonal level via the CCI (Thomas et al., 2014) and also evaluated critical reflection at the structural level via the CRPI (the critical reflection: perceived inequality subscale of the CCS; Diemer et al., 2014). The CCI does not distinguish between different types of oppression, and while the CRPI is domain-specific and attends to racial/ethnic, gendered, and class-based educational and occupational inequality, it does not assess individuals' awareness of the intrapsychic and interpersonal consequences of class. Therefore, it is possible that students in this sample were not critically conscious about class-based oppression and inequalities, even though they had high critical consciousness in other domains of oppression that were not specified in this study, such as gender and race/ethnicity, which would understandably not result in a buffering effect for the negative effects of social class on self-esteem.

Another interpretation is that, although participants with higher critical consciousness might in fact have a greater capacity to reflect on how class-based oppression and inequality lead to various negative sociopolitical outcomes as measured by the CRPI, this type of reflection might not necessarily lead lower-class students to become more introspective and analyze the intrapsychic and interpersonal consequences of class-based oppression. Alternatively, students might have been able to reflect both on the structural and individual outcomes of social class; however, such an intellectual

understanding might not have resulted in the disentanglement of the internalized, inferior sense of self for low-class students, especially due to the repeated negative experiences they encounter based on their class status (i.e., low social prestige and social power). It is possible that the development and maintenance of more positive self-esteem, which would also positively affect SWB, might require a supplemental sets of skills and support.

A closer examination of the results also suggests that, contrary to expectations, critical consciousness may actually have an inverse-moderating effect. That is, students with low social power and low social prestige (i.e., low-social-class students) who had higher levels of critical consciousness reported lower self-esteem, lower satisfaction with life, and higher negative affect than low-social-class students with moderate and low levels of critical consciousness. However, it should be underscored that this observed conditional indirect effect was not statistically significant among the three levels of critical consciousness.

Nonetheless, although it is not significant but speculative, the surprisingness of the finding merits commentary. It seems to imply that high critical consciousness actually lowered the self-esteem of low-social-class students and increased the self-esteem of high-social-class students, producing a larger indirect effect of subjective social class on SWB. This result might be explained by critical consciousness actually making classism and oppression more salient for students with higher critical consciousness. For example, for students with low perceived social power and social prestige, being aware of the recurrent acts of oppression and engaging in action that does not result in the desired outcomes might have indirectly decreased their SWB by causing them to feel useless and

like a failure, namely by lowering their self-esteem. On the other hand, high-social-class students with higher critical consciousness might engage in cognitive strategies, consciously or unconsciously, to inflate their self-esteem (e.g., focusing on their exceptional personal qualities) in an effort to overcompensate for their awareness of the fact that their power and privilege might not actually be deserved, in order to avoid feelings of guilt and shame.

Despite that these results were not statistically significant, given that they offer insight that can be considered relevant for practice and theory, their implications for practice and for further research will be discussed below.

Clinical Implications

The findings of this study illuminate the importance of implementing several types of preventative and remedial interventions that are targeted and culturally sensitive for college students, specifically for students from lower-social-class backgrounds. A variety of individual and systemic interventions could be delivered to address the detrimental consequences of low perceived social power and social prestige on students' self-esteem, satisfaction with their lives, and experiences with negative affect.

First, at the individual level, in order to improve their self-esteem, clinicians can help increase the clients' perceived social power and social prestige by encouraging and supporting them in joining student organizations and communities and obtaining leadership positions based on their interests. For example, engagement with leadership activities would help increase the clients' social power by allowing them to influence the decision-making processes, feel more in control of their environment, and develop a greater sense of agency. Being involved in different social groups (e.g., student

organizations and communities) based on their abilities and skills would help increase the clients' social prestige by allowing them to develop relationships wherein they would feel accepted, respected, and valued, and by giving them the opportunity to gain accomplishments and have their abilities and skills be recognized by others and by themselves, all of which would likely improve the position they hold in the micro-society of campus. The increased social power and social prestige through these activities, in return, would improve the clients' self-esteem and then would lead to higher SWB. Additionally, interventions can also focus directly on promoting a positive self-concept and increasing self-esteem by employing strength- and resiliency-based approaches to promote positive SWB outcomes. Furthermore, given the direct effect of social prestige on negative affect, interventions should also directly aim at helping clients develop skills to cope with and decrease negative affect, for example, by teaching them mindfulness-based emotion-regulation skills.

Critical consciousness did not act as a buffer for the negative consequences of low social class on self-esteem in this study. However, based on my interpretations of the findings and the value of theoretical discussions and previous empirical findings, clinicians should still be encouraged to help clients develop critical consciousness—the capacity for critical reflection and critical action—particularly with regards to social class and classism and their negative consequences at the intrapsychic, interpersonal, and systemic levels. For example, clinicians can help clients reflect on and analyze how their low-social-class status might have negatively influenced their self-concept and psychological well-being due to class-based oppression and injustice. The interventions can help clients to identify and process their experiences with oppression and untangle

the resulting negative internalizations of the self to help develop a more positive self-concept and improve self-esteem. Clinicians can assist clients in changing their self-narrative and gain self-advocacy and assertiveness skills to interrupt the acts of oppression and place the responsibility on right person (Isom, 2000). This would help clients feel empowered and more in control of how they are treated, which would potentially decrease their negative affect and increase their satisfaction with their lives. However, clinicians should also be highly aware of the possibility that increased critical reflection and critical action might not necessarily lead to transformative changes but might result in increased negative psychological outcomes. For this reason, clinicians should prepare clients for such consequences, provide ongoing therapeutic assistance, encourage them to use effective coping skills, and help them develop social networks for continued support.

Vera and Speight (2003) discussed that, with a commitment to social justice, counseling psychologists should expand their professional activities beyond therapy to advocacy, outreach, prevention, training, and research in an effort to address the needs of clients from oppressed backgrounds. Counseling psychologists should work to reduce systemic barriers for clients from lower-social-class backgrounds, challenge classism, and change societal perceptions of class to address social justice issues related to this population. In order to do so, in addition to working with clients individually, psychologists at university counseling centers can implement outreach programs in an effort to provide services to low-social-class students who otherwise may not be able to seek such services (e.g., due to having a job), acknowledge and normalize these students' experiences and struggles, increase these students' visibility on campus, and explicitly

address issues of classism on campus, which would also benefit higher-social-class students and create an inclusive campus community. In collaboration with campus partners, discussion or support groups can be formed for sustained dialogue and helping students engage in activism. Additionally, given the positive influence of social-group participation on self-esteem and SWB, psychologists can also advocate for the creation of resources for lower-class students to become involved in various social activities on campus.

Psychologists should also pay attention to indicators of their own social prestige (e.g., clothing/jewelry worn and office furniture) and power (e.g., being part of an educational system students might feel intimidated by) and how this might influence the therapy process. Additionally, psychologists who are involved with training and supervision should incorporate issues of class and help trainees explore their values and assumptions about social class and meritocracy through didactics and experiential activities. Finally, psychologists should expand their understanding of social class to include classism (Liu et al., 2004a, Liu et al., 2004b) when working with clients from low-social-class backgrounds, similar to focusing on racism or homophobia when working with racial or sexual minorities.

Strengths of This Study

This study addresses the several limitations existing in the study of social class in psychology. It highlights the importance of social class as a diversity factor and expands the multicultural research by systemically exploring its relationships to the psychological variables of self-esteem and SWB (Ostrove & Cole, 2003; Liu et al., 2004a; APA TFSS, 2007). By using the theory-based conceptualization of the DSI framework (Fouad and

Brown, 2000), it increases our understanding of the multidimensional nature of social class and treats it as a psychological variable. Furthermore, it provides insight into how different dimensions of social class (i.e., social power, social prestige, and economic resources) can differentially influence self-esteem and SWB. The findings of this study provide understanding and provoke further inquiry into how critical consciousness might influence self-concept and psychological outcomes differently for different groups based on power, privilege and contextual factors, along with offering suggestions for how critical consciousness can be integrated into clinical practice. With particular attention paid to college students from lower-social-class backgrounds, this study increases the visibility of this population in higher education. It provides recommendations for the provision of culturally sensitive individual and systemic interventions in an effort to encourage psychologists and other mental health professionals to understand and attend to the mental health needs of these students. Finally, this study calls for psychologists to expand their understanding of social class as it relates to practice, training, supervision, and self-reflection.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

In addition to its strengths, this study has several limitations. First, the majority of the participants were female (69.5%) and European American/White (50.2%)—followed by Hispanic American (18.9%), Asian American/Pacific Islander (10.5%), and African American/Black (8.7%)—and almost half were graduate students (43.6 %). Research has shown group differences on the effect size of the relationship between social class and self-esteem: it is larger for women, largest for Asian Americans (followed by Whites and Blacks), and lowest for Hispanic Americans, and it increases from late adolescence to

middle adulthood (Twenge & Campbell, 2002). Such group differences might have impacted the size of the indirect and conditional indirect effects but were not explored due to the unequal and insufficient sample sizes of the subgroups. Moreover, asking graduate students about their social class by comparing themselves and their family to an average US citizen/family could be complicated. Students may have been away from home for a while and their current economic resources might be different than those of their families. This may have affected their responses to the economic resources scales; though, specific interpretations cannot be made due to the inability to determine what they specifically based their comparisons on. Therefore, future research should recruit more heterogeneous and larger samples to explore the potential group differences and consider the potential developmental and social class identification differences for older/graduate students to have a deeper understanding for the relationships between social class, SWB, and self-esteem.

Second, the cross-sectional and correlational nature of this study disallows making absolute causal inferences about the relation between social class, self-esteem, and SWB. Different theories explain the relationship between social class and mental health differently. According to the social selection theory, people who experience mental health problems are more likely to belong to a lower social class due to impaired social and occupational functioning, whereas the social causation theory posits that people from lower social classes are subjected to continued stress, which leaves them vulnerable to psychological problems (APA TFSS, 2007). Although accumulated findings seem to support both theories (APA TFSS, 2007), longitudinal research is needed to establish causal relationships between these variables.

Third, this study was not able to differentiate between the types of institutions participants attended. Based on theory and research, it can be assumed that class-based experiences of students at elite versus public institutions would be different (e.g., Aries & Seider, 2005). Low-social-class students attending elite schools might suffer from greater negative psychological consequences due to the visibly larger status differences between them and their peers, who likely would belong to more privileged backgrounds; while these students would be more likely to fit in and their class status would be less visible at a public institution, where they would interact with peers from similar class backgrounds. Moreover, for students from multiple oppressed backgrounds/non-ordinant groups (e.g., a Black, female, lower-class student), which of their oppressed identities are more salient and how they interact to influence self-esteem and SWB might differ. Future research should explore how students' other social identities intersect with their social class and jointly affect their self-esteem and SWB (Cole, 2009) and how this occurs at different types of institutions.

Additionally, it was suggested that self-concept involves both personal self-esteem and collective self-esteem (i.e., one's evaluation of and relatedness to one's social group) and that examining only personal self-esteem limits our understanding of self-concept and its relation to various psychological outcomes (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). As such, another line of research has shown significant relationships between collective self-esteem and SWB among ethnically/racially diverse group of college students (Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine, & Broadnax, 1994). Furthermore, correlations were still significant for minority students but not for White students after controlling for personal self-esteem (measured by RSE). Extrapolating from this, future research can explore how

students', especially lower-class-students', collective self-esteem regarding their social class might influence the relationships between social class, personal self-esteem, and SWB.

In this study, self-esteem was a partial mediator between social power and social prestige and components of SWB, which shows that there are other mediators. Moreover, while the economic resources dimension of social class was not significantly related to self-esteem, it was significantly related to satisfaction with life and negative affect. While these results are correlational in nature, they might suggest that different dimensions of social class differentially influence SWB through different mediators. Therefore, future research should also explore the additional mediators between social class and SWB, as well as any potential mediators or moderators between economic resources and SWB. Furthermore, given the possibility that economic resources might be more salient and important for evaluating self-worth for non-college-student young adults, future research can also explore the differences between college students and working young adults to gain a greater understanding of how different dimensions of social class might be related to self-esteem and SWB differently among different populations.

In exploring the methodological limitations that might have affected the results of the conditional process analyses, it is possible that participants might not have answered the critical consciousness questions accurately due to worrying about sounding prejudiced or oppressive, resulting in some range restriction and fewer participants with low critical consciousness. This limited variability in critical consciousness scores might have affected the results in two different ways: 1) It might have produced a *false* inverse conditional indirect effect (i.e., a moderating effect, though not significant); that is, high critical

consciousness strengthened the indirect effect in this sample, when in fact, it reduces it by acting as a buffer between low social class and self-esteem. 2) It might have masked a *true* inverse and statistically significant conditional indirect effect; that is, high critical consciousness in reality significantly strengthens the indirect effect of social class on SWB through self-esteem, but this significance was not captured in this sample due to range restriction.

Additionally, because moderator effects are generally small, even in simple moderation models (Frazier et al., 2004), the small indirect effects and the sample size in this study might have also obscured a meaningful conditional indirect effect in the more complex moderated mediation model of this study. Although this study achieved enough power with 275 participants to capture significant indirect effects, it is likely that the power of this study was not adequately high for a moderated mediation model. Even though no formal calculation of sample size is provided for moderated mediation models, future studies should attempt to replicate the findings with larger samples. Additionally future studies should investigate the differential effects of different levels of critical consciousness on psychological outcomes for different populations and different contexts. Finally, future research should also explore whether critical consciousness is a domain-specific ability or whether it has general components that transcend all types of oppression, as well as the implications of these possibilities for theory, assessment, and practice.

Conclusion

Despite that fact that social class has long been neglected in multicultural research and clinical practice in psychology (Argyle, 1994; Brown et al., 1996; Frable, 1997;

Ostrove & Cole, 2003; APA TFSS, 2007), with a shift in focus, researchers have started to attend to how it influences psychological outcomes. This study aims at contributing to the study of and multiculturally effective practice concerning social class, and it provides important implications for clinicians and researchers. Particularly, the findings of this study suggest that lack of perceived social power and social prestige can have detrimental effects on the self-esteem and SWB of lower-social-class students. In order to address the mental health needs of this population, clinicians should implement culturally sensitive interventions that may include increasing clients' sense of agency and control over their environment and promotion of self-worth and a more positive self-concept. Clinicians should also help clients with critical consciousness development and skill acquisition to assertively interrupt acts of oppression and to cope with their negative consequences. Clinicians should also work to reduce the systemic barriers for these students to access to resources and challenge classism through outreach and advocacy. Researchers should explore the differential effects of critical consciousness for individuals from different backgrounds in terms of power and privilege.

APPENDIX A:
A RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Hello,

My name is Fatma Aydin and I'm a doctoral candidate in the Counseling Psychology Program at Loyola University Chicago.

I would like to ask for your participation for a study that I'm conducting for my dissertation. It takes approximately 15 minutes to complete the study and you can enter a raffle to win one of sixteen \$25 Amazon Gift Cards!

Participation in this study is voluntary and if you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a set of questions about your demographic information, perceptions of your life, yourself, and your social and economic standings, and your beliefs about oppression and inequality.

If you would like to participate please follow the link below to obtain more information about the survey and complete the questions. You will be directed to a separate webpage to enter the raffle at the end of the study.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,
Fatma Aydin

APPENDIX B:
CONSENT FORM

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: *Self-Esteem and Critical Consciousness in the Relation Between Social Class and Subjective Well-Being: A Moderated Mediation Model*

Researcher(s): *Fatma Aydin, MA*

Faculty Sponsor: *Anita Thomas, Ph.D.*

Introduction:

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Fatma Aydin for a dissertation under the supervision of Anita Thomas in the Department of Counseling Psychology at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because I, Fatma Aydin, am interested in the opinions of diverse group of college students. You are eligible to participate in this study if you are 18 years old and older, and if you are currently an undergraduate or a graduate student at a college or a university in the United States of America.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to examine college students' beliefs about their social and economic standing compared to others in the society, how those beliefs influence their perceptions of themselves and their lives, and how their beliefs about oppression and equality might influence those perceptions.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete a set of questions about your demographic information, perceptions of your life, yourself, and your social and economic standings, and your beliefs about oppression and inequality. It should take you approximately 15 minutes to complete the surveys. You will not be asked to write your name on the surveys and all responses will remain anonymous. Your honest and complete response to the survey questions will be highly appreciated for valid research results.

Risks/Benefits:

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. However, please feel free to contact Loyola University Chicago Wellness Center to speak with a counselor due to any discomfort that might be caused by the survey questions at:

Website: <http://www.luc.edu/wellness/>

Phone: (773) 508-2530 (Lake Shore Campus), (312) 915-6360 (Water Tower Campus).

There are no direct benefits to you from participation, but the information will help us to

understand how students' perceptions about themselves and their social and economic standing, and their ideas about oppression and equality influence their well-being.

Compensation:

As a token of my appreciation, you can choose to enter a raffle to win **one** of sixteen \$25 Amazon gift cards. If you wish to enter the raffle, you will be directed to a separate web page to enter your name and email address, upon completion of the study. Your name will not be matched to the survey data. The raffle will be drawn after all data is collected. **If you win** a \$25 Amazon Gift Card, you will be contacted by the researcher via the email address you provide. In that email, you will be asked to provide a current mailing address for your gift card to be sent to you. After gift cards are sent to raffle winners, all participants' names, email addresses, and mailing addresses collected for the raffle will be destroyed.

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study to the degree permitted by the technology used. Your participation in this online study involves risks similar to a person's everyday use of the Internet. Information obtained as a result of this survey will be kept confidential and all data will be kept in a password-protected file on the computer of the primary researcher. Data presented at conferences or for publication will not identify any individuals who participated. There are no questions on the surveys that will ask for identifying information. If you choose to enter the raffle at the end, your name and email address you provide will not be connected to your responses.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. If you complete this anonymous survey and then submit it to the researcher, the researcher will be unable to extract anonymous data from the database should you wish it withdrawn.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact Fatma Aydin, School of Education, Counseling Psychology, at faydin@luc.edu or the faculty sponsor Dr. Anita Thomas, School of Education, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research at (312) 915-7403 or at athoma9@luc.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent:

By completing the survey you are agreeing to participate in this research. Your completion of the survey will indicate consent for an informed participation. If you decide not to participate in this study, you may simply disregard this survey. Thank you very much for your time and effort.

Sincerely,
Fatma Aydin, MA

Do you consent the participate:

- Yes, I consent to participate.
- No, I don't consent to participate.

APPENDIX C:
SURVEY PACKAGE

Demographics Form

Age _____

Gender:

- Male
 Female
 Other (please describe): _____

Race/Ethnicity:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic-American | <input type="checkbox"/> Native-American |
| <input type="checkbox"/> African-American/Black | <input type="checkbox"/> Multiracial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> European American/White | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian-American/Pacific Islander | |

School _____

Year in School:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Freshmen | <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sophomore | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Junior | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior | |

What is your approximate household income before taxes?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under \$ 20,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$120,000 to less than \$140,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000 to less than \$40,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$140,000 to less than \$160,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$40,000 to less than \$60,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$160,000 to less than \$180,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$60,000 to less than \$80,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$180,000 to less than \$200,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$80,000 to less than \$100,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$200,000 or more |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000 to less than \$120,000 | |

How would you describe your social class?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lower class | <input type="checkbox"/> Upper-middle class |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lower-middle class | <input type="checkbox"/> Upper class |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Middle class | |

Father's Highest Level of Education

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Did Not Complete High School | <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GED | <input type="checkbox"/> Master's Degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High School Diploma | <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral Degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Associate's Degree | |

Mother's Highest Level of Education

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Did Not Complete High School | <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GED | <input type="checkbox"/> Master's Degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High School Diploma | <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral Degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Associate's Degree | |

Compare yourself and your family to what you think the average citizen/family in the United States is like. Please indicate how you compare to the average citizen/family by circling one of the responses on the following scale:

Very Much Below Average	Below Average	Equal	Above Average	Very Much Above Average
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

For example, if you believe you and your family are equal to the average U.S. citizens in terms of your ability to afford to go to the movies, you would circle “0” on the first item below.

1. Ability to afford to go to the movies, restaurants, and/or the theater on a regular basis.

-2 -1 0 +1 +2

2. Ability to afford additional educational experiences like ballet, tap, art/music classes, science camp, etc.

-2 -1 0 +1 +2

3. Ability to join a health club/fitness center.

-2 -1 0 +1 +2

4. Ability to afford regular dental visits.

-2 -1 0 +1 +2

5. Ability to afford dry cleaning services on a regular basis.

-2 -1 0 +1 +2

6. Ability to travel recreationally/take a family vacation.

-2 -1 0 +1 +2

7. Ability to travel overseas for business and/or pleasure.

-2 -1 0 +1 +2

8. Ability to shop comfortably in upscale department stores, such as Saks Fifth Avenue.

-2 -1 0 +1 +2

9. Potential for receiving a large inheritance.

-2 -1 0 +1 +2

10. Ability to secure loans with low interest rates.

-2 -1 0 +1 +2

11. Ability to hire professional money managers.

-2 -1 0 +1 +2

12. Ability to go to a doctor or hospital of your own choosing.

-2 -1 0 +1 +2

13. Ability to hire others for domestic chores (e.g. cleaning, gardening, child care, etc.).

-2 -1 0 +1 +2

14. Ability to afford prescription medicine.

-2 -1 0 +1 +2

15. Ability to afford elective surgeries and/or high-cost medical examinations, such as MRIs or CAT scans.

-2 -1 0 +1 +2

Compare what is available to you and your family in terms of type and/or amount of resources to what you believe is available to the average citizen/family in the United States. Please indicate how you compare to the average citizen/family in terms of the type and amount of resources by circling one of the responses on the following scale:

Very Much Below Average	Below Average	Equal	Above Average	Very Much Above Average
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

For example, if you believe you and your family are equal to the average U.S. citizen in amount of money you have, you would circle “0” for item 1 below.

1. Money	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
2. Land Owned	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
3. Stocks and Bonds	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
4. House(s) Owned	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
5. Cars	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
6. Computers	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
7. New Appliances (Washers, Dryers, Refrigerators, etc.)	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
8. Amount of Education	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
9. Quality of High School(s) Attended	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
10. Life Insurance	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
11. Quality of Health Insurance	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
12. Savings	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
13. Maids or Cooks	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
14. Close Connections to the Rich and Powerful	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
15. Quality of Health Care	-2	-1	0	+1	+2

Compare yourself and your family to what you think the average citizen/family in the United States is like. Please indicate how you and your family compare to the average citizen in your ability to do the things below by circling a response on the following scale:

Very Much Below Average	Below Average	Equal	Above Average	Very Much Above Average
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

For example, if you believe you and your family are equal to the average U.S. citizen/family in your ability to contact people in high places for a job, you would circle “0” for item 1.

1. Contact people in high places for a job or position.
-2 -1 0 +1 +2
2. Contact people who can help you get out of legal problems.
-2 -1 0 +1 +2
3. Start a job in a high-profile position that requires responsibility.
-2 -1 0 +1 +2
4. Get information and services not available to the general public.
-2 -1 0 +1 +2
5. Control how your social group is represented in history, media, and the public.
-2 -1 0 +1 +2
6. Receive a fair trial.
-2 -1 0 +1 +2
7. Become a millionaire by legal means.
-2 -1 0 +1 +2
8. Control the type and amount of work of others.
-2 -1 0 +1 +2
9. Control the salary and compensation of others.
-2 -1 0 +1 +2
10. Influence the laws and regulations of your state or city/town.
-2 -1 0 +1 +2
11. Influence state or federal educational policies.
-2 -1 0 +1 +2
12. Influence the policies of a corporation.
-2 -1 0 +1 +2

13. Influence where and when stores are built and operated.

-2 -1 0 +1 +2

14. Influence where and when waste treatment facilities are built and operated.

-2 -1 0 +1 +2

15. Influence the decision-making of foundations, charities, hospitals, museums, etc.

-2 -1 0 +1 +2

Compared to how society values or appreciates the average U.S. citizen/family, how does society value or appreciate your . . . ?

	Much Less -2	Less -1	Equal 0	More +1	Much More +2		
1. Ethnic/racial group			-2	-1	0	+1	+2
2. Socioeconomic group			-2	-1	0	+1	+2
3. Nationality			-2	-1	0	+1	+2

Compared to how society values or appreciates the average U.S. citizen/family, how does society value or appreciate the . . . ?

	Much Less -2	Less -1	Equal 0	More +1	Much More +2			
1. Neighborhood in which you live				-2	-1	0	+1	+2
2. Type of home you live in				-2	-1	0	+1	+2
3. Places where you shop				-2	-1	0	+1	+2
4. Places where you relax and have fun				-2	-1	0	+1	+2
5. Type and amount of education you				-2	-1	0	+1	+2
6. Type of car you drive				-2	-1	0	+1	+2
7. Position you hold in society				-2	-1	0	+1	+2

Compared to how society values or appreciates the average U.S. citizen/family, how much does society value or appreciate your . . . ?

	Much Less -2	Less -1	Equal 0	More +1	Much More +2
--	-----------------	------------	------------	------------	-----------------

1. Physical appearance	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
2. Occupational success	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
3. Financial success	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
4. Physical abilities	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
5. Economic background	-2	-1	0	+1	+2

Directions: The following statements concern thoughts you might have about yourself and a variety of situations. There may be more than one choice that you agree with, but circle the choice that best describes you.

- 1a. I believe that the world is basically fair.
 1b. I believe that the world is basically fair but others believe that it is unfair.
 1c. I believe that the world is unfair for some people.
 1d. I believe that the world is unfair, and I make sure to treat others fairly.
- 2a. I believe that all people are treated equally.
 2b. I believe that some people don't take advantage of opportunities given to them and blame others instead.
 2c. I believe that some groups are discriminated against.
 2d. I work to make sure that people are treated equally and are given equal chances.
- 3a. I think that education gives everyone an equal chance to do well.
 3b. I think that education gives everyone who works hard an equal chance.
 3c. I think that the educational system is unequal.
 3d. I think that the educational system needs to be changed in order for everyone to have an equal chance.
- 4a. I believe people get what they deserve.
 4b. I believe that some people are treated badly but there are ways that they can work to be treated fairly.
 4c. I believe that some people are treated badly because of oppression.
 4d. I feel angry that some people are treated badly because of oppression and I often do something to change it.
- 5a. I think all social groups are respected.
 5b. I think the social groups that are not respected have done things that lead people to think badly of them.
 5c. I think people do not respect members of some social groups based on stereotypes.
 5d. I am respectful of people in all social groups, and I speak up when others are not.
- 6a. I don't notice when people make prejudiced comments.
 6b. I notice when people make prejudiced comments and it hurts me.

6c. It hurts me when people make prejudiced comments but I am able to move on.
 6d. When someone makes a prejudiced comment, I tell them that what they said is hurtful.

7a. When people tell a joke that makes fun of a social group, I laugh and don't really think about it.

7b. When people tell a joke that makes fun of a social group, I laugh but also feel uncomfortable.

7c. When people tell a joke that makes fun of a social group, I realize that the joke is based on a stereotype.

7d. I tell people when I feel that their joke was offensive.

8a. I don't see much oppression in this country.

8b. I feel hopeless and overwhelmed when I think about oppression in this country.

8c. I feel like oppression in this country is less than in the past and will continue to change.

8d. I actively work to support organizations which help people who are oppressed.

9a. I don't feel bad when people say they have been oppressed.

9b. I feel sad or angry when experiencing or seeing oppression.

9c. I often become sad or angry when experiencing or seeing oppression, but I find ways to cope with my feelings.

9d. I work to protect myself from negative feelings when acts of oppression happen.

Instructions: Please respond to the following statements by circling how much you agree or disagree with each statement. For each statement, choose "Strongly Disagree," "Mostly Disagree," "Slightly Disagree," "Slightly Agree," "Mostly Agree," or "Strongly Agree."

Strongly Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

1 2 3 4 5 6

5. Poor people have fewer chances to get good jobs

1 2 3 4 5 6

6. Certain racial or ethnic groups have fewer chances to get ahead

1 2 3 4 5 6

7. Women have fewer chances to get ahead

1 2 3 4 5 6

8. Poor people have fewer chances to get ahead

1 2 3 4 5 6

The next questions ask about your current feelings about yourself. For each of the following, please circle the number that corresponds with the answer that best describes how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement about yourself now.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	1	2	3	4
2. At times, I think I am no good at all.	1	2	3	4
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	1	2	3	4
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.	1	2	3	4
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	1	2	3	4
6. I certainly feel useless at times.	1	2	3	4
7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	1	2	3	4
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.	1	2	3	4
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	1	2	3	4
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.	1	2	3	4

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 - 7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

In most ways my life is close to my ideal. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

The conditions of my life are excellent so far.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am satisfied with life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Below are a number of words describing different feelings and emotions.
Please read each word and indicate to what extent you *generally* feel this way.

	Very slightly or not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
Interested:	1	2	3	4	5
Stressed:	1	2	3	4	5
Excited:	1	2	3	4	5
Upset:	1	2	3	4	5
Strong:	1	2	3	4	5
Guilty:	1	2	3	4	5
Scared:	1	2	3	4	5
Angry:	1	2	3	4	5
Enthusiastic:	1	2	3	4	5
Proud:	1	2	3	4	5
Irritated:	1	2	3	4	5
Alert:	1	2	3	4	5
Ashamed:	1	2	3	4	5
Motivated:	1	2	3	4	5
Nervous	1	2	3	4	5
Determined:	1	2	3	4	5
Attentive:	1	2	3	4	5
Worried:	1	2	3	4	5
Active:	1	2	3	4	5
Afraid:	1	2	3	4	5

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