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Title: AMONG FRIENDS? CLASSED NAVIGATIONS OF AN ELITE SOCIAL SCENE

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Abstract

Both class and racial status matter for establishing connections within a university setting and peer groups exert a heavy influence on the thoughts and actions of students (Flores-Gonzalez 2002). This research assesses socialization patterns across these demographic cleavages, in part by showing how students encounter and react to the dominant elite culture at an elite, private university. Recent research has portrayed the undergraduate experience as the great equalizer (Torche 2011). However, if disadvantaged students are unable to fit in socially, they will be less likely to benefit from the unique network opportunities offered by a highly selective university. This work examines how class and racial/ethnic status matter for forming important social bonds at a highly selective university.

Introduction

Successful social adjustment is critical for university students. Peer relations may be the most important element of successful integration into the university community (Astin 1993; Thomas 2000) and social alienation can have deleterious effects on a student's sense of wellbeing (Stewart and Ostrove 1993). For example, isolated students are more likely to drop out compared to socially adjusted students. Conversely, being friends with a group of high achieving students is positively related to student satisfaction with instruction, curricular requirements, and student life. Quantitative studies have shown that peer SES has greater positive effects on student outcomes compared to other environmental characteristics, including organizational and faculty based characteristics (Astin 1993). The quality of peer networks is especially important in persistence and building social ties that help students post-graduation on the job market (Goodwin 2006).

These processes of stratification often result in segregation by demographic cleavages, which hinder the social opportunities of working class and minority students within the university setting (Beasley 2011). The more similar one's home community and school community are the less adjustment a student will have to make in order to fit into the school community (Carter 2005). This process may disadvantage non-upper class and minority students at university. Studies have shown that beliefs, particularly as pertaining to achievement, vary by class and race/ethnic status (Fischer and Hartmann 1995; Oliver, Mickelson and Rodriguez 1985). Minority students, particularly at historically white universities, are more likely to experience marginalization, stress, racism and difficulty in making friends across racial lines compared to their white peers (Beasley 2011; Hughey 2010; Oliver, Mickelson and Rodriguez 1985; Allen 1988;

Antonio 2004; Fischer and Hartmann 1995; Altbach and Lomotey 1991). Complicating the ability to utilize the important networks available at an elite university, working class students are more likely than other students to be tied to jobs that are low status, thus yielding them, not only less time to participate in important friendship and network building opportunities, but also by tracking them into less elite networks.

University life is a new and unsettled time for all students. In contrast to familiar, routine situations that allow individuals to interact with minimal thought (Swidler 1986; Goffman 1959), new environments cause people to work to orient themselves (Goffman 1959). Many, if not most students selected for elite schools, pack their belongings, correspond with their new roommates, and head to a geographic, social and cultural location that is new to them. This research examines how a student's particular class and race-ethnic background either constrains or enables their navigation of the various social situations during university life.

Factors that Matter for Socialization

People's actions are based on their internalization of appropriate norms and behaviors and this process is heavily influenced by one's social location in society (Bourdieu 1984; Swidler 1986). Bounded rationality is based on social experiences and creates vastly different orientations to the world and the educational system, in particular (McDonough 1997). Student's attitudes about their social success and wellbeing at university are tied to their individual social capital, the advantages that are connected to one's social ties (Coleman 1988; Portes 1998), and cultural capital, or the possession both of cultural know-how and the ability to naturally link that know-how to appropriate situations.

Social and cultural capital vary significantly by class location and in large part, student capitals reflect the capital empowerment of their parents (Bourdieu 1984; Lareau 2003). Massey, Charles, Lundy and Fischer (2003) found that measures of parental investment in cultivating cultural and social capital was significantly and positively related to both a student's self-esteem and high school GPA. These influences are particularly important for developing meaningful relationships.

Klandermans, Roefs and Olivier (2001) find that regardless of objective conditions, subjective referencing of others influences how people feel about their situation. If they feel that they are worse off compared to others, or worse off than they used to be, or if they have the expectation that their situation will worsen in the future, they are more likely to experience grievances. This theory of relative deprivation is similar to the dual frame of reference theory. The latter theory is mainly used in studying children's aspirations in relation to their parent's levels of success (Lopez 2002). For example, Portes and Zhou (1993) found that second generation immigrants were more likely to adhere to traditional ladders of success, such as education, if their parents have achieved success, compared to immigrants whose parents' hard work earned them menial labor and poor jobs. Medvec, Madey and Gilovich (1995) found complementary processes when examining Olympic medalists. I expect that social happenings will unfold at SVU along these themes.

Upper-income

The majority of students at private elite schools are located in the upper-income brackets (Espenshade and Radford 2009). The result is that the dominant social scene on campus belongs to these students. For upper class students, life at a highly selective

university is often a mere extension of their prior life. Their direct reference group consists of their immediate family and friends, many of whom have experienced a university life similar to the one they are now experiencing. Although university life is expected to be difficult for all students, upper-middle and upper income students, based on their background, are in the prime position for a smooth transition compared to non-upper income students.

These students are the gold medalists. Upon arrival to campus, they are greeted with expected interactions and most importantly people who share their same taste in cultural objects, such as food, clothing and entertainment. Their social capital, cultural capital and attached narratives have prepared them for this important transition and will all align with their existence at this university and thus, their mental narrative regarding socializing will be solid. They have received the appropriate repertoire for successful social integration at an elite university. As a consequence, I expect them to report the highest levels of social ease.

Middle SES Students

Unlike their upper-class counterparts, the cultural and social capital backgrounds of middle-income students have not prepared them for a seamless transition to SVU. While more familiar with the rules of the game than lower-income students, these students may not be able to successfully signal that they belong (Eder, Evans and Park 1995). If they actively aspire to achieve the approval of those in the upper echelons they will likely come in contact with social obstacles, which will make them more aware of the gap between social groups and specifically of the handicap of their position in social space. Although their admittance to a highly selective university signals success, they will

be more likely to want to fit in to the dominant culture and thus may feel relatively deprived compared to their upper-income peers (Bourdieu 1984).

Similar to the silver medalists in Medvec et al.'s study, who were less satisfied with their silver because they were so close to achieving the gold, their success does not imbue confidence. These students will lack the social connections and cultural know-how of their elite counterparts. The precariousness of their social position will increase their propensity for stress, which may further inhibit their social ease. Thus, I expect them to experience less satisfaction confidence socially compared to their upper-income peers.

Low SES Students

In terms of socio-economic status, the school community is the least congruous to the background of low-income students (Granfield 1991; Tinto 1993) and it is expected that these students will have to work harder to find their niche in the social worlds of a highly selective university because working class members are the least likely to have associations with people from social classes located above their own social class (Nenga 2003). However, because these students often have little to no experience with an elite community they may be less likely, compared to the middle-income students, to desire to fit into this community (Nenga 2003; Kuh and Whitt 1988). For lower-income students, their achievement is evidence that people can achieve despite their background and like the bronze medalists, their immediate reference point is not achieving a medal, or in this case elite access, at all. Thus, they may be less cynical of the system of stratification and merit and thus less inclined to find fault with the dominant culture, even if they do not naturally fit into it.

However, low-income students are more likely to work during school and also to work longer hours, which may negatively impact their ability to socialize in elite networks (Anderson 1981). They may be unable to incorporate as many organized activities as other students and this may result in fewer social networking opportunities or opportunities to build cultural capital for these students. Their potential to build valuable social and cultural capital may be tracked away from the high status elite networks at a highly selective university, both by incongruent social selves, as well as the external demands such as work and financial responsibilities.

Minority Students

Minority students arrive to university less prepared than their white counterparts and are more likely to experience stress and dissatisfaction than their white counterparts (Oliver, Mickelson and Rodriguez 1985; Allen 1988; Antonio 2004; Fischer and Hartmann 1995; Altbach and Lomotey 1991). Particularly at a highly selective university students with a minority status are more likely to be socially marginalized; this effect is especially stark in historical white spaces (Espenshade and Radford 2009; Hughey 2010; Allen 1988; Antonio 2004; Fischer and Hartmann 1995; Moore 2008). However, some work suggests that the advantages minority students receive from attending highly selective universities outweigh the disadvantages (Bowen and Bok 1998).

In sum, class and race systematically add to each student's experience and influence their social experience at university. These differences, in class-based social and cultural capital, financial and work obligations, and race-ethnic status have implications for a student's ability to fit into the dominant social scene. These factors potentially move lower-income and minority students away from the university norm. I

expect to find that non-upper-income and minority students will be more likely to describe difficulties in fitting in socially and/or their networks will be less rich compared to upper-income students.

DATA AND METHODS

Site Information

Of the many, many colleges in the United States only a handful are considered highly selective. Highly selective schools attract more elite applicant pools compared to less selective schools (Alon and Tienda 2007); the annual income of the applicants' parents is larger and the parent's educational levels are greater (Espenshade and Radford 2009). *Southern Valley University*ⁱ (SVU) is one of these schools. Most American colleges and universities accept at least 80 percent of their applicants, the most selective U.S. schools accept less than 50 percent and SVU accepts less than 25 percent of its applicants (Menand 2003; Espenshade and Radford 2009; Alon and Tienda 2007; SVU 2010)ⁱⁱ. Most incoming students were in the top-ten percent of their high school class and nearly 10 percent of the students of the 2010 incoming class at SVU were valedictorians (SVU 2010). Over 11 percent of students at SVU are legacy students, meaning someone in their close family is an alumnus. In the 2010-2011 school year, this percentage increased to 20 percent.

SVU is a large, urban school, with nearly 20,000 undergraduates located on the West Coast, in a racially and ethnically diverse area. The campus is also racially and ethnically diverse; less than 45% of the student body identifies as Caucasian. Asian and Asian American students are the next largest racial/ethnic category represented, making up nearly one quarter of the student body. Twelve percent of the incoming class identify

as Hispanic/Latino and 7% as African-American. Slightly over one-tenth of the 2010 incoming class was first-generation college students. SVU is typical in that it has slightly more females than males. Students are not required to live on campus and the majority of students live off-campus.

Characteristics of Sample

Often people straddle the boundary of several class locations. In order to categorize students by class, I assessed the student's own description of their class, their parent's occupation and education, as well as their financial aid packages (whether they were eligible for need-based aid) and the student's background. The following table shows typical characteristics of students in each category.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

Composition of Sample

In total, my sample includes 43 interviewees, 17 coded as upper-income, 16 as middle-income and 10 as lower-income. I wanted to capture student experience as close to arrival at SVU as possible, because with time, people can change their personal narratives to reflect the outcome of their experience (Blee 2002). However, I also felt it was pertinent to interview a range of grade levels because students near the end of their academic trek are more able to reflect on their experiences. Further, research has shown that the achievement of first-year students strongly correlates with their degree attainment and further, that high school grades are better predictors of degree attainment than standardized test scores (Bowen, Chingos and McPherson 2009). For these reasons, I included students across all grade levels at SVU, as well as several recent alumni. My sample of 43 students allowed me to interview students across several racial/ethnic

backgrounds. Although my primary interest is in the class backgrounds of students, it is important to consider how race/ethnic background and class intersect to form different educational trajectories for students at SVU. The racial composition of my sample is 25 white students, 7 Asian-American Students, 6 Latino students, 2 Black students and 3 students who I coded as other. Much of the qualitative research on educational adjustment and class background focuses solely on one gender and research has shown that gender matters for both educational motivation and achievement (Holland and Eisenhart 1990 and Bettie 2003). The gender composition of my sample is as follows: 17 males and 26 females.

Methods

In February of 2009, I began interviewing students and I completed the 43 in-depth, semi-structured and open-ended interviews in November of that same year. I have remained in contact with several of the students since the end of data collection. I recruited students in a variety of ways. I attended undergraduate courses and spoke to the classrooms about my project and asked students to volunteer their time and participate. I visited four classrooms and recruited approximately three students from each session. I also emailed the heads of campus organizations and asked them to send out mass emails to students. I recruited some of my most interesting interviewees through these organizations. I also met students through personal connections. Finally, I canvassed the campus and pitched my research to approachable students. Canvassing the campus allowed me to spend active time on campus, as opposed to the passive observer. Several times I was able to get an interview on the spot and other times I was able to set up an interview for a later time.

All but one of the forty-three interviews were conducted on or within 1 mile of SVU's campus. The aberration was a recent alumna who preferred to be interviewed at her office. The interviews lasted approximately one hour, although some of the interviewees were less talkative and a few of the interviewees were extremely talkative. My most terse interview was under 30 minutes and the most talkative was nearly three hours long. The interviewees were overwhelmingly candid about their lives. Students opened up about sex, drugs and alcohol. They discussed problems with their friends, their family and school. We talked about family members passing away from both natural and unnatural causes. We discussed their hopes, dreams and insecurities.

I took copious notes during the interviews, noting what the students were wearing and mannerisms that were particular to each. After the interview and within the next 24 hours I took analytical notes on the interview. I answered questions about the interviewees: What is this person's main activity at SVU? Is the person secure in this environment? Is the person having any difficulties? In addition, I described the context of the interview, where did we meet? What was the weather like? What events were occurring on campus? These notes were immensely helpful for the final write-up.

Finally, I transcribed the interviews, completing them at the tail end of 2009. Transcribing the interviews was incredible in that it brought the interview back to life. When I listened to the student's voices I was reminded of who they are, what their energy was like the day we talked, if they were in a hurry, or nervous, aiming to please or slightly disinterested. Combined, my field notes, along with the theoretical notes I took while transcribing gave me a set of themes that occurred throughout the interview, this open coding led to the next step in the coding process, line-by-line coding (Emerson,

Fretz and Shaw 1995). I line-by-line coded the transcribed interviews, using over forty coding categories (Lofland, Snow, Anderson and Lofland 2006). Once this process was finished in 2010, I had a robust dataset. I arranged the data to look at subjects related to academic problems and was discerned themes tied to the class background of students. This inductive analysis allowed me to understand commonalities both among students in the same class categories as well as among all the students in my sample and to flesh out what exactly was happening at SVU.

Social Efficacy

To assess students' extent of social adjustment, I engaged measures of social efficacy, such as positive self-concept and availability of a strong support system, factors which are related to student success (Sedlacek and Sheu 2004; Sedlacek 2004; Ramsey 2008; Astin 1993). Specifically, I analyze four aspects of student social life. These four areas are: 1) either having or not having a positive attitude towards their social life, 2) as either feeling or not feeling he/she is able to participate on campus as he/she wishes (for this measure I examined whether or not the student perceived obstacles to him/her fitting in, including time constraints)ⁱⁱⁱ, 3) whether or not the student demonstrates a connection to the *spirit family* at SVU^{iv} and finally 4) the availability or lack thereof of a strong support system or safety net^v. I measure how many of these factors students exhibit in their description of their social lives at SVU.

FINDINGS

In analyzing the findings on the links between social status and social adjustment, I find that class and race both matter for social success. Not surprisingly, many students

across these social demographics describe their social life as less than ideal. I describe the major class and race-based themes below.

Upper-Income

Fully one hundred percent of upper-income students have a social safety net, compared to 69-70% of the middle- and low-income students in my sample. They are also the least likely to describe obstacles to fitting in, 88%, compared to 44% and 40% respectively for low-income students. Finally, they are most likely to have a positive attitude towards the university's spirit community. For these students, university is a place to learn and to socialize; it is an extension of their time in high school and in that, a way to expand on their already solid social and cultural foundations. It is the natural step from high school and their existence at SVU is met with enthusiasm.

For example, take Brynn, an upper-income, white, female student who is the prototype for a well-adjusted SVU student and who demonstrated advantage on all four aspects. I find her ready for an interview outside of the coffee shop near campus, sipping an iced latte. She is not naturally blonde, but her dye job is superb, and the straight, white blonde hair combined with a deep tan gives her a glowing California girl appearance. Her make-up accents her features in a way that is noticeable, but not overdone. She is wearing a bright, pastel-colored polo shirt with a delicate gold necklace and designer jeans. For her shoes, she wears trendy light-gold colored strappy sandals that somehow match both her gold-colored beach cruiser (which she rides away on while talking on her phone), and her Louis Vuitton handbag, which doubles as her backpack and is big enough to hold her text and notebooks. Brynn is heavily involved in her sorority and loves SVU and the spirit family. The first thing Brynn tells me about SVU is her social life.

Me: Can you please describe your experience at SVU?

Brynn: I've had an absolute blast at SVU...I have met the best friends of my life...I have learned a lot...from my sorority, about leadership and social roles and how do you conduct yourself out in public.

That Brynn feels at home at SVU is undeniable. Brynn is a good example of the transcendence of class-based cultural and social capital in particular, because geographically Brynn is far from home. She grew up in the space where both South and the Midwest can act as descriptors. Despite being a teenager, more than 5 plane hours away from home, her narration demonstrates her fit at SVU. She is having the best time of her life. When I ask her to describe her schedule, the list is long and accomplishes career goals, socializing and academics.

Me: Can you describe your schedule for me?

Brynn: Okay, I volunteer at the News station here, about eight hours a week...and then I have six classes, and then for sorority stuff we have, I'm probably in 10 hours a week of meetings. I'm in a few societies with the school for journalism so every few weeks we have meetings for that and then socializing, oh gosh that probably take's up, like a part-time job (laughs). I would say probably 20 hours a week socializing.

Brynn is incredibly busy. She uses the words part-time job to describe her schedule. However, the "work" Brynn does beyond the classroom builds her social connections, her cultural capital or directly relates to her future profession, i.e. it is high status work. Later, she relates that her sorority is actively cultivating a particular version of cultural capital by taking the time to teach its members appropriate behavior. Below she describes the importance of the Greek system:

Brynn: ...It's huge here, it's very well-connected it's, something I appreciate about the Greek system is that although there are the rivalries among the different houses, everyone bands together to help each other...everyone kind of helps each other, when I'm looking for an internship if someone in another sorority has a connection they are more willing to help me.

Me: Because you are in a sorority?

Brynn: Just because you are in the Greek life and you know, when you're in the Greek life, kind of, everyone kind of knows each other on the row.

A male complement of Brynn is Ted, also an upper-income student. He is close to both of his parents, his mom an environmental lawyer and his dad, who owns his own business. He's not on financial aid and has never held a job. He also is advantaged on all of the social measures. Ted arrives for our on-campus interview by leisurely skating through the plaza, by which both a coffee shop and a fountain are located. He seems very surfer cool with his medium-length unkempt, wavy hair, light brown army jacket, and a neon-colored shirt with his fraternity letters on it, a popular brand of skater shoes and plaid shorts. When asked to talk about SVU, he embarks on a devoted monologue of his love for SVU. He feels it is a balanced school, offering good academics, good sports, and a good social life. Like Brynn, most of his time is spent working for and partying with his fraternity house. He has been the social chair for two years, both formally and informally.

From Ted:

Me: How would you describe the culture at SVU?

Ted: I think there is not one culture at SVU, there's the Greek life, there is a culture there. There is a culture of non-Greeks, and there is an athlete culture. They've got their own little clique. So it's kind of like different cultures based on what you're part of. I couldn't even compare the fraternity culture with the people who are not in fraternities, it just doesn't, there's just no, there is no connection, it's completely separate cultures.

ME: Do you have friends that are not in fraternities?

Ted: Yeah, I do, but very few of them and, and they're kind of just clearly not woven into our culture. We have to make an effort to get to see them really. Like I haven't seen, like one of my best friends isn't in a fraternity and I haven't seen him for like a month.

Me: Did you meet him here?

Ted: Yeah, in new North in my hallway, he was just too stubborn to join a fraternity. Now he hates himself. He wishes he did, because you just don't have anything to do here really. If you're a social person, you've got to be in a fraternity or sorority because that's how it works here, I think.

Ted acknowledges that there are many cultures at SVU, but definitely the best and most prominent, in his view, is the Greek culture. He describes that if you are a guy at SVU and not in a fraternity you are socially, “kind of screwed” and describes a God-Damned Independent (GDI) friend of his as “hating his life” because he’s not in a fraternity.

When there is a fit between the student and his/her environment, students, like Brynn and Ted, speak only positively about their social life at SVU. In part, due to its steep monetary requirements, the Greek system acts as an arbiter, by sorting students into specific social spaces based on both race and class. Once in, the system channels students’ social activities and connections, to the benefit of the Greek community. There were a couple of upper-income students in my sample who were not engaged socially at SVU. However, these students were not burdened by financial obligations.

Middle-Income

Middle-income students are less at ease socially compared to upper income students. These students are disconnected because they are not a good fit for SVU, in particular, not because they are social outcasts (Bowen and Bok 1998). Their orientation to life does not match that of the organizational orientation at SVU. Many of the students I found who were disconnected from a social life at SVU were critical of SVU.

Take for example, Alex, a middle-income, female student who has not adjusted well socially. Alex doesn’t participate in the dominant social scene on campus. Below is her initial response when asked how she feels about her school.

Alex: I hate SVU. I transferred here last year because my mother got a job at the day care on campus and I get a full ride and I transferred for that, I had high hopes coming here, but I am more often than not disgusted by the people, their attitude about things is really just, it just doesn’t match anything that I stand for, so I have

my boyfriend and an old friend that I hang out with. Other than that, I stick to myself and my work.

Throughout the interview Alex describes her frustration at the shallowness of her peers. This theme was reflected by several students including, Jaime, a maladjusted middle-income female, who did not demonstrate advantage on any of the social realms. She describes herself as middle class and is only able to attend SVU because she received need-based grants and is taking on work-study hours. Jaime has long, dark, wavy hair and wears only a slight bit of make-up, notably brown eyeliner. She's dressed in low-end brand name clothes, clothes that are found at department stores such as JC Penney's or Sears, a brown hoody, with a long grayish black shirt underneath, dark-colored khaki shorts and a knock-off pair of skater shoes. As the interview begins it is immediately apparent that she is not happy; within the first few minutes she is critical of SVU and relays that she is considering transferring:

Jaime: Well, honestly I'm thinking about transferring because I don't really like it very much...I find that it's, sort of, I don't know, like pretentious and the people are not necessarily as interested in, you know, academics as I thought they would be, it's more like a party school and people just don't seem to care as much as I thought they would, at this good of a school.

Later in the interview, Jaime situates her experience in relation to upper-income students at SVU:

Jaime: I think that since SVU isn't like one of, it's a good school but not one of the best schools, like an Ivy League or something, the people who go here tend to be, this is a generalization, but like rich kids who weren't smart enough to get into Ivy League schools.

Me: Where does that put you?

Jaime: I can't really identify with that because I, I don't have a lot of money and I worked really hard to get here.

Jaime has managed to make a couple of friends at SVU, however her friends are not woven into SVU socially. Both of her closest friends are considering transferring,

one because she is not fitting in, the other because of financial reasons. Similar to Flores-Gonzalez (2002) who found that for high school students having a group of peers that deemphasizes education can encourage a student to dismiss school as unimportant, in Jaime's case having friends who deemphasize the importance of remaining at SVU, encourages her to consider transferring also. Rather than connecting her to the university, Jaime's limited social supports act as a wedge between her and the university. Though finances are described as an added burden for both Jaime, her main source of dissatisfaction with the university is their inability to fit in to the social environment.

Like Alex and Jaime, Damien, a male middle-income, bi-ethnic, white and Latino, student describes both tangible obstacles, such as his work schedule and less tangible, socio-cultural, differences that burden his social life. Damien works between 15 and 25 hours a week in a low-status, federally funded work-study job that is subject to change each semester. Damien is hyper, in a nervous, searching for a place to focus his energies, kind of way. He wears his stress on his shoulders and has frequent, stress-related stomach problems. His dark hair is thick, and tousled, stylish, yet not trendy, rather conservative for the look at SVU. If you look closely there are flecks of grey and white hairs in his full head of hair. Damien is 19 years old. He is maybe six foot one, 165 lbs. and muscular. He has a clear complexion, dark brown eyes, hair, eyebrows and long eyelashes. His dress is khaki pants, a white and blue plaid button-down, and flip-flops. He wears sunglasses and he remarks later in the interview that they are not of a brand that would be considered quality by some of his acquaintances at SVU. He feels a lot of pressure, not only to do well in school, because of the large amount of loans he and his parents are taking out, but

also to fit in, to look good. In high school he was super involved, but here at SVU he one extracurricular activity, a recreational, hip-hop group, described below.

Damien: (In high school) I did so many extra-curriculars, I did soccer, track, a cappella, different shows at school, I did senior planning, a peer counseling thing, I liked it a lot.

Me: Are you involved in any extracurricular activities here?

Damien: Besides my hip-hop dance, all I do really, right now is work.

And later:

Damien: I really wish I could experience things like I did in high school, where I could join as many extra-curriculars or do as many things as I wanted to, but you really can't because of the workload.

Further describing his social adjustment to SVU, Damien shows how financial stress interferes with his social life. In the process Damien uses his upper-income peers as a reference point in evaluating his own situation. This frame of reference is illustrative of the concept proposed by Medvec et. al's 1995 study. Damien is enacting the experience of the Olympic silver medalists.

Damien: The reason why I don't drink right now or why I don't drink during the school year is simply because my grades are too important to me, I cannot mess up here because my parents are paying so much for this, it would be a shame if I missed a deadline or missed, there are so many deadlines, so many deadlines, financial aid, housing, all that stuff, I hear kids, I got kids and they are just like why are you so stressed Damien? Why are you so stressed? And I'm just like, I'm filling out my student aid stuff, I have two different, three different loans I have to fill out and they're like oh, my parents take care of that for me, I have heard from some kids they haven't done laundry for the first time ever and I'm like, honestly? Some kids, I guess can't even pack their own paper bag lunch, its kind of funny.

Damien is not only burdened by material disadvantages. Like Jaime he also feels like he doesn't belong in the social scene at SVU. When talking about his general experience at SVU:

Damien: I thought it would be easier to get along with people... I feel that I am generally accepting, then again I am biased, obviously because I am thinking about me, but I just, it was a little bit difficult to adjust...a lot of people I felt gave

the cold shoulder, a lot of the time and didn't really want to make friends. I generally go out of my way to talk to people, I remember my rooming situation last year I was there and I was walking down a corridor and the day before, I had talked to this girl and she waved to the people who were in front of me, I was coming down the corridor, maybe about, I don't know 10 yards or so, people in front of her were just like, hey, what's up? And she's like, oh hey, what's up? And she had a book in front of her, but she wasn't studying, it was kind of obvious, I come by and I had talked to her the day before, just, actually for an hour, we had an in-depth conversation, I waved at her and she immediately gave me a look like, like I don't know, she gave me a look, a disapproving look as if she didn't want to say hi or acknowledge my presence, it kind of hurt.

Finally, Damien ties the competitive fashion scene at SVU to the Greek scene:

Damien: Here, you get frat guys, frat girls, sorority girls and all other sorts of people wearing lots of different colored clothing, like very, very, very brightly clothing with eccentric patterns and they look very unique, but it's just, I've noticed the culture here aesthetically looks like it's very, very, competitive aesthetically.

Damien's main emotion relating to his social life is anxiety. Part of this anxiety may be brought on by his financial stress. Because the time he has for his social life is restricted by work and school responsibilities, Damien views his social life as a job where he needs to be productive at all times. Unlike Brynn, who laughs at describing her social commitments as a job, Damien emanates the stress of his social time crunch. Even in his leisure time, he is working to maximize his financial investment. Tied to loans and the need to succeed, he is unable to relax.

Low-Income

Lisa is a lower-income, white, female student who was raised by a single mother since her father's death during her childhood. Lisa works an average of 35 hours per week. Her complexion is light and clear and she has long, near black hair, wears black frames for glasses, and dark nail polish. Lisa is arguably fashionable, yet of a genre that is in opposition to the fashion norm of SVU. Her calf-high boots are black, her jeans are a

faded black, her tank top is white and her arms are covered in tattoos. She pulls off this attire without looking gothic. This seeming contradiction may be made possible by the fact that she works at a high-end clothing boutique. Lisa displays social disadvantage on all four of the social measures. Not only has Lisa not adjusted socially to SVU, she is critical of SVU and the pervasive social scene at SVU.

Me: Since you started school have you felt like you belonged to a community?

Lisa: No, not this one.

Me: How so?

Lisa: I don't really hang out with anyone from school, I haven't felt welcomed into anything, I don't think people here are particularly friendly unless you are in a sorority or something, which I'm not really interested in doing.

Jill also is a female, white, low-income student who also was raised by a single working mother. Her father was a drug addict, had a terminal illness and died of an overdose. Her mother recently remarried and Jill only "kind of" gets along with her stepfather. I met Jill at the student cafeteria. She had just completed a workout and was dressed somewhat utilitarian, with black workout pants with white stripes down the side and a simple tank top. Socially and psychologically she depends on her boyfriend, who is not pursuing a college education and who lives several states away. She fills her weekend conversing on the phone with him. She is not socialized into the SVU fold, in fact she claims to have no real friends at SVU and she feels intimidated by other girls. Like Lisa, Jill displayed no signs of advantage on the four social aspects.

Jill: Socially, umm, I'm not really (clears throat) having the greatest experience and that's my own fault because...I just don't feel comfortable, I like having my boyfriend with me at social gatherings. I do wish I had made some close friends to just like hang out with and eat with and stuff like that, but I get a little bit of social anxiety now, in terms of making friends and I don't know why...I have this fear that they are judging me all the time. I don't know, I don't really understand it. Umm, yeah. Academically, good. Socially, not so much.

And when I asked her about her friendships at SVU:

Jill: I would say I only have acquaintances here...It's weird though because I find that like, probably the two people that I would call pretty close friends, even though I don't hang out with them a lot, but every once in a while and it's more like a thing where I can might call them up and like talk to them, would be guys and it makes my boyfriend uncomfortable and I don't know... why, I just..., I tend to feel just more uncomfortable around girls, I don't know why. Probably some deep psychological issues or something. I just feel, I don't know, like just intimidated by girls sometimes.

Jill also feels that her work obligations infringe on her ability to participate fully at SVU:

Me: Are you in any organized activities?

Jill: Right now, that's another thing, I hope I can cut my work hours down next year because, hopefully my boyfriend will be working full time and I can just cut my work hours down to like 10 or 15 or make them just more, like in the morning instead of the evening. I work during the meetings, I forget what they're called, you know the gay rights organization that is here on campus and that's always been a passion of mine, so they meet on Monday nights so hopefully I'll have that time free just to go to those meetings and (clears throat). Because I went to a few at the beginning of last semester and then I started working a lot and I never have that time free.

Me: Do you work every night?

Jill: I work every day of every week day right now and like Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursday's I work like from 3:30-9 or 10 at night and then like on Wednesdays I work just from 5-6:20, just a short shift, and then on Fridays I work 9-11:50 in the morning. So basically Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays are pretty, like I have school during the day and maybe fit, I have time to fit in a workout, you know, and then I just work basically into the night and then I don't have much time before I should be going to bed to do much.

Me: So you feel like if you didn't work you would engage in more extracurricular activities?

Jill: Oh definitely, there are tons of organizations here on campus that sound interesting...and you know I might check out other clubs too, but right now it's not even (pause) important to me because I just want to go home and go to sleep and I mostly work during any, any club meeting times. I would also love to go to, just the events. There is this one initiative, where there's all these cool speakers and artists always visiting campus. A lot of the time I'm working during their performances and stuff, which are often free, which is just a great opportunity and I would really love to see more of those.

These excerpts from Jill demonstrate how agency, her social motivations, and structure, her work commitments, do not complement one another and negatively impact

her social life. Although both working and non-working students participate enthusiastically in the system, I find that most of the students who work on-campus feel that they participate less because of their work hours and would like to participate more. These students are across the board from the middle-income and lower-income class brackets.

Students of Color

SVU is a diverse campus and although students often spoke of diversity, many students, and sometimes the same students, spoke about the separateness of groups on campus by race. When asked to describe the general culture of SVU in their own words, many students spoke of the racially segregated social lives on campus. For example, take Alex, described earlier.

Me: Can you describe the general culture at SVU?

Alex: Either you're in sports, you're in a fraternity or a sorority or you are in some kind of minority group or the band, you have to fit into very narrow categories I've never seen such a segregated place, it's, maybe I have just haven't been so critical of it, but the black kids hang out with the black kids, the white kids hang out, clearly hang out with the white kids, the athletes hang out with the athletes and that's it.

De, a first-generation immigrant from the Caribbean, describes her experience at

SVU:

De: There is a lot of, there's kind of a lot of segregation sometimes as far as, sometimes there's a lot of, there's like separation, like in ethnic groups a lot, that I noticed. I'm not that familiar with it just because in band there's lots of different people, but like, a big reason that I didn't want to join...associations for black people...I just don't like those kinds of organizations like, "Oh you're black, I'm black, okay, we should be friends." What does that, I don't know, I just think it's stupid, but sometimes because of those organizations or because of whatever sometimes there is like a certain group of people that only hang out with people of a certain ethnicity or something.

And from Francesca, a first-generation middle-income Hispanic student from Chile.

Francesca: I think the Greek scene is completely white and they are kind of exclusive and have a superior attitude, I think that, between races, I think, there's also like an Asian Greek scene, but it's very much pushed off to the side and no one really cares about it unless you're in it.

And Tiffany, a white upper-middle class student:

Tiffany: It actually felt, mostly, racially segregated on a macro level, but in my friend group most of my friends actually, for whatever reason ended up going to school in other countries, like they are American kids who ended up coming here, mostly Singapore and some in Hong Kong so I ended up having a really diverse friend group, so I didn't really notice on a micro level, because a lot of my good friends were, Indian, or Asian, white too, but on a macro level, when you look at it from a 30,000 foot view, it looks segregated.

And from Ken, an upper-class white student, who was recruited by the admissions office to help make decisions on which students should receive scholarships and who also received four out of four on social efficacy measures:

Ken: I think culturally the background here is very diverse like we're becoming a more diverse place, but we're becoming a more diverse place in kind of an interesting way culturally speaking and I think it's kind of, from what I can see, like working in the admissions office and everything, like the University, they're kind of like in a cultural flux where it used to be SVU was kind of this home of Californians and they're starting to reduce that and kind of admit more people from across the United States and they're also beginning to, they're admitting a lot more, you know, international students and that culture from the international students hasn't really permeated to the culture of either Americans or Californian students at all, they actually kind of, I feel like it's like a faction type thing.

Me: What do you mean?

Ken: So like the conglomerate of students that come from India or from China, they, not that I would expect them to assimilate or anything like that, I just don't think there is barely interaction between the rest of the community and their group and the group of people that came from China, like they sit together in their classes and we sit together so there's little interaction there which is kind of a, it's kind of troubling, but yeah, I think the students that are coming from international places that I think have a lot to share they're here for, they are here just for utility, for education, I think the average US student now comes to college for more than just an education, so that's kind of different and bad.

Although many students spoke of this balkanization on campus, several minority students in my sample did not fit into the dominant social scene at SVU and described that they were happy with their alternative social life. For example, take the students I interviewed, both lower-income and minority students who were in band. When I asked De to describe her social life:

De: Basically 90% of the people I know are in band, just because that's how it is, like we spend so much time together. Otherwise, I do have a few friends in classes and stuff, but usually I don't hang out with them as much as people from band. Pretty much when you're in band your closest friends are in band and you hang out and you party and you, do whatever, like I have acquaintances and other, like from class and from where I lived, like different dorms, but I don't really hang out with them. I mean this semester I was able to make kind of closer friends with people from my class just because we have a lot of projects to do together, but otherwise most of my friends are from and in band. My roommates have been in band with me for four years.

In addition to providing strong social support, De's involvement in the band at SVU, which is an alternative to the Pan-Hellenic scene, keeps her intimately tied to the Spirit family at SVU. Not surprisingly, when asked about her relationship to the sorority system on campus, De describes her experience in band in fraternal terms, "The band is kind of a fraternity with instruments and so like, I'm in that and then the other stuff I'm not really involved in." As a social niche, band allows De a social life that is alternative, but not antagonistic to the dominant culture. During the interview De told me a popular story relating to the history of the school and sang the school song to me.

Fabian, like De, describes most of his social time being taken up with band. When describing his schedule, Fabian and I had the following conversation regarding his schedule:

Fabian: Class everyday, and in the afternoon band practice.
Me: How many hours a week?

Fabian: Probably more than 20 hours a week...I mean we had practice Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, all day Saturday because we had practice in the morning and when there was a football game we were there all day so easily 20, so my weekend was basically one day football and then Sunday, was all I had left to study but Sunday I was always recovering from the day before, so it was kind of hard, but spring was completely different because in spring there was no marching band practice in the afternoon, it was completely different, we had a basketball band that only met once a week and the game was only once at night, maybe on a Thursday night, so spring I had a lot more free time.

Unlike De, Fabian also participated in a minority-interest group on campus. He was part of a Mexican American Association on campus, a group from whom he had received a scholarship. When he had free time from band, work and studies he would participate in activities with this association. Many of these activities took him off campus and into the surrounding communities. Several of the minority students in my sample were involved in minority specific organizations.

Nearly all of the minority students in my sample spoke of hardships endured that happened because of their race and/or ethnicity. Rachel is the exception. She shows up to the interview, in a café connected to her dorms of her choosing, smiling and looking full of energy. She is wearing light make-up that you can see if you look closely, she has purple nail polish on, but does not stand out in an alternative sense. Rachel is dressed trendy-style: Her skirt has flowers, her light grey, v-necked t-shirt has a smattering of different colors screen printed on it, her shoes are pointy-toed flats and her jewelry is dainty and full of sparkle. Rachel seems to me the epitome of what Damien described about the fashion scene at SVU below.

Rachel is a first generation Chinese-American. She grew up in Chicago's Chinatown. A description of Rachel exemplifies the difficulty in locating people in the class structure. Although Rachel is low-income, both based on her actual financial means,

and also based on her mother's occupational status, unemployed seamstress, surprisingly at SVU Rachel is not bogged down by financial concerns. She receives the maximum Pell grant, other need-based grants, scholarships and her mom pays approximately \$2000 per semester. She is fortunate in that she is not taking out any loans.

At SVU she works to fit in to the high cultural expectations of her Asian-interest sorority. Below Rachel elaborates on her cultural immersion into the classy lifestyle of her friends at SVU.

Rachel: I wasn't as attuned to how things look before, it's kind of hard to explain...like for Rush we had to pick a really nice venue that looked really classy, and which was really nice and we had to think about what kind of dress we were wearing to Rush and the food we were serving and the party favors that we were giving out because we only gave out glass party favors so it is classier and I guess like, yeah, I learned about event planning and what it takes to make an event classier so that it doesn't look tacky.

And later:

Rachel: I am much more high maintenance now, it's very interesting. I'm a lot more high maintenance now.

Me: Can you give an example?

Rachel: The other day my boyfriend wore a wrinkly shirt on a date with me and I told him, don't wear a wrinkly shirt, I probably would not have noticed that his shirt was wrinkly (before), but I was like, "Why are you wearing a wrinkly shirt on a date with me?" And he was like, "Oh, okay." Yeah, that is sort of high maintenance, I don't know, like clothes, high maintenance, I wore a lot of sweatshirts last year, but I feel like, like how you dress yourself matters, just because it's not even like buying really expensive clothes, it's like dressing yourself so you look neat and put together instead of just wearing sweatshirts everyday. And places that we go to for dates, like we go to Little Tokyo a lot because it's like, it's nicer, it's a lot cleaner than Chinatown, we used to go to Chinatown more because I really like Chinese food and I miss Chinese food, but we go to Little Tokyo more just because it's more popular, as a place to go to, just because the restaurants and the gift shops there are, they cater to SVU students and like middle to high income families because it's a lot cleaner and the restaurants are nicer.

Rachel is aware that the culture of the upper-class lifestyle dominates at SVU and she works to become a part of it. Formerly, she was not attuned to nuances in taste or

décor, both tangible (like glass versus plastic party favors), and more subtle, like the way cheaper food tastes compared to more expensive food. She is a willing participant in the upward-mobility lessons her peers are giving her. At SVU, Rachel is one of the most highly involved students in my sample, and possibly school-wide. She has a work-study job with an Asian-American student association on campus. She has a GPA of 3.3, she takes a full class-load and is heavily involved in her Asian-interest sorority, further she participates in four other extra-curricular activities on a regular basis. Rachel has some complaints, like there are not enough hours in the day and she wishes she was closer to her mother, but on a whole she loves her time at SVU.

Like Rachel, Selena is happy socially at SVU. Selena is a low-income, first-generation Mexican-American who grew up in the poor neighborhoods surrounding SVU. Selena shows up to meet me at a coffee shop on campus decked out in full SVU gear. Her shirt is bright with the bold colors of SVU and her bag matches. Selena spent an incredible amount of her time since 7th grade preparing for SVU. She and eight of her friends participated in an organization is called Neighborhood Cultivation of Education (NCE). From 7th grade through 12th grade she attended Saturday school each week and from 9th through 12th grade she and her friends came to the SVU campus every morning to be tutored. Although eight of her friends originally joined, one moved away and three others were not accepted by SVU, although they did receive grants from the program and are all attending four-year universities. At SVU lives near all four of her friends and has many other acquaintances from the NCE program, including NCE graduates from previous years. In addition to NCE, Selena attended a 7-week summer program before her freshman year at SVU, the aim of which was to prepare her for life at SVU. During

this time, she lived on campus and took two classes. The program focused on establishing a sense of belonging among the minority-only students. These programs have had a huge impact on her experiences at SVU.

Selena: I never thought that I would be able to come here, I was really doubting my acceptance here and I remember during the summer program we played this game where you were either, our RA asked the question like, “Do you feel like you belong, like you should be here, like you deserve to be here?” And I stepped in to say no because I really didn’t feel like I belonged here, but then coming to the classes and actually starting school, that made me realize that I am supposed to be here, so now I kind of embrace that more, that I am supposed to be here, but before that I didn’t, I felt like I didn’t deserve it.

In addition to being proud to be at SVU, Selena does have financial concerns, but her excitement at being accepted into SVU and her ability to have her friends here with her, counteract her financial concerns.

Selena: I love having my close friends here, I guess so that’s a comfort and I like it that my mom is down the street. The friends that I have made here have been really, really nice and understanding and really open, they are really open-minded, that is what I love about SVU, I guess the diversity and like my suitemate for the summer program was actually Arabian, and she was like the best roommate ever, she was really nice and we got along, we never had problems, anything, it was really nice.

A couple of her upper-classmen contacts in NCE are in a minority interest sorority, and Selena plans to join in the future. Although Selena willingly shares her happy experiences with SVU, she is vocal about the racial and ethnic ignorance she experiences as a student at SVU.

Whereas Rachel, described above, looked forward to and enjoys exploring her Asian identity, Gary, also a first-generation Chinese-American is anxious and works to avoid situations where he has to navigate what he describes as two cultures:

Gary: There are so many different things in those two cultures, I just don’t know where to choose from and what I want to keep and what I want to do and especially with seeing Asian-American Student association where it’s like, roots

before branches, it's just like I want to adopt my roots or whatnot and in class we learned about the third generation hypothesis where the second generation has a foot in and a foot out of mainstream culture and their own culture and I feel like I am having that dilemma there, where it's just like I want to leave my culture and what not and just be accepted and be able to attain whatever, and then there is always a culture, like a big, white elephant in the room of your background and your history and the color of your skin, the way your eyes look.

Gary feels the issue is forced upon him here:

Gary: I dealt with this problem, back home by suppressing my own culture and now that my own culture is brought up more, it is more emphasized, I see it in my dorm, in my suite even, more than half of them are of Chinese descent and we can speak to each other in Chinese and you know, in the past festival we offer each other mooncakes and what not so that part of the culture is coming back and I think it's harder to deal with now because it is actually in my face...I don't want to deal with it, but I know I have to deal with it, it's kind of one of those things where it's a really hard thing to deal with, but I know I need to deal with it so...

Gary feels he is being forced to contend with his ethnic background, whereas previously he could ignore this dimension of his identity.

Selena, described above, also feels her ethnicity acts as a burden, but for different reasons than those mentioned by Gary. While Gary feels students at SVU are more versed in his cultural heritage than his classmates in the past, Selena feels the opposite and is bothered by the ignorance she witnesses among the students at SVU.

Selena: I just feel, it's not that they're not educated enough, it's just that they didn't grow up around at that same, that same culture, like they're used to their culture, so I'm like used to seeing an uncle come across or something and they are not, so I feel like they just need to learn more about that. I don't believe that it's their fault, but it is their responsibility to learn, the different things about the world, yeah and in discussion I feel like my friend helped me have a voice, because he's Latino also and we had to say why we took the class and he said oh, I took the class because both of my parents are immigrants so when he said that I got up the courage to say that too, that both of my parents were immigrants also and it was like, a lot of them didn't know my race or something just because after that they stopped saying like certain comments...because they were like making racial comments.

Me: During class?

Selena: Yes, during discussion, that same discussion, it was during discussion, so after me and my friend said that, they backed off a little, but then I'm like, well

what if they never, you never know when somebody is listening to you, so you shouldn't say those things anyways.

And later, when pressed for an example:

Selena: Well, okay, she read a quote, our discussion teacher read a quote and we had to guess what kind of immigrant they were and they said, in the quote it said that if we mate with these immigrants we are going to become shorter and the population is going to grow, like tenfold or something it was really going to become a lot of people, so one of the guys said, "Did you say that we were going to become short? Oh, they must be Mexican", and then this other guy said "Oh, and if we're going to overpopulate it must be Mexicans because they have babies like crazy."

S: So I'm like, okay, like I'm a Mexican, but I didn't say anything and then it turned out not to be Mexicans, it was like Irish and stuff, they were from back then, so I was like, it goes to show you what people think, so it was interesting, I was like, that was nice, things like that just piss you off, I guess.

Overall, Selena is very happy at SVU, although she feels that many of the students at SVU are naïve when it comes to race, ethnicity and immigration. Based on the student interviews, where students often described the segregated nature of campus, combined with research that predicts minorities to have a harder time adjusting to a predominantly white university (Hughey 2010, Oliver, Mickelson and Rodriguez 1985; Allen 1988; Antonio 2004; Fischer and Hartmann 1995; Altbach and Lomotey 1991), I expected there to be clear racial differences in outcomes on the social efficacy measure. That the racial differences were less dramatic leads me to believe that there may separate, but satisfying social realms for these students.

Organizations, like band, and minority-interest groups and organizations are working to socialize minority students so that they feel connected to SVU, although they may not be less connected to the dominant culture on campus. Surprisingly, my findings support both camps of prior research. The balkanization of students by race is a mainstay of life at SVU showing that we are not, in fact, entering a post-racial era, even at elite

intellectual establishments, where color blindness may be expected to prevail most easily. Race still matters for who you know at SVU. However, complementary to Bowen and Bok's 1998 findings, social adjustment by race is complicated in that students of minority status are increasingly able to find their way and develop parallel social worlds which offer them satisfactory social experiences during university. Given recent findings that cross-racial interaction leads to positive social and intellectual outcomes for students (Chang, Astin and Kim 2004), further studies need to investigate the consequences of this segregated system, particularly for first-job experiences.

Conclusions

Most of the students at SVU have social skills and social lives. Most of them also have a close relationship to their parents, with the outliers spread equally across the class cleavages. However, there are some patterns in the social lives of the students in my sample that fall into traditional sociological cleavages. There are differences in how students adjust by class, with middle- and lower-income students showing similar levels of social maladjustment compared to upper income students.

The culture and community of SVU most closely reflect the communities of upper class life and upper class students to adjust most easily to SVU. The transition from their home life to university life is smooth because the objects and culture of SVU are familiar to the objects and culture they are already predisposed to see as routine and favorable. Thus, the mental and emotional work to fit in is lessened. Similar to the gold medalists in Medvec et al.'s study who have proof of their abilities, the upper class students experience the greatest feelings of social success at SVU. In navigating their social life at SVU they reference their home and past social life. Their past closely mirrors the social

scene at SVU and their transition progresses most smoothly compared to both lower and middle-income students. Life at SVU is an extension of their prior lives. While all students face some difficulties in the transition to college, compared to their lower- and middle-income peers, these students navigate seamlessly through the social scene at SVU, mired with less self doubts about their belonging.

University life offers a transition to adulthood for all youth, and importantly, for the non-upper income student, a transition of upward social mobility. However, non-upper income students to have a harder time adjusting socially. In Medvec et al's study the silver medalists seemed envious of and referenced the gold medalists. This reference point made their achievement shine less brightly. Similarly, the middle-income students at SVU tend toward referencing their upper-income peers and display that they are less impressed by their achievement at SVU. Socially they are set-up to be envious of the social ease of their upper-class counterparts.

Like the Olympian bronze medalists who appeared happier with their achievement than silver medalists, because their immediate reference point was not having attained a medal at all, (Medvec, Madey and Gilovich 1995), low-income and minority students report more positive attitudes regarding their social situation at SVU compared to middle-income students. Given their background their achievement is an anomaly; by attending an elite university they have surpassed all expectations and this knowledge secures their ability to see themselves as successful. Lower-income students are most self-conscious about their class, and they are also the most effusive in expressing their right to be at SVU. Their self-doubts are mitigated by with their having accomplished becoming a student at SVU. Additionally, many of them have support

networks in the form of campus organizations that help support their transition, like Selena who spent time the summer before her freshman year living on campus and participating in activities to alleviate any feeling of unworthiness. These organizations work hard to create an identity of accomplishment and expectations of success for many of the lower-income students in my sample.

People gravitate towards people like them. This tendency of homophily in friendships disadvantages both middle- and low-income students by excluding them from connections with elite students. The middle-income students arrive at SVU, unprepared both financially and mentally for the culture of privilege and excess that dominates. They are less likely to have institutionalized support networks and thus are as likely as lower-income students at SVU to feel overwhelmed and intimidated socially. Many of them express feelings of discontent towards SVU and the student body.

Two of the major benefits of attending an elite school are being able to interact with elite peers and also to participate in important pre-career activities, such as internships, high status jobs. But socialization at a highly selective university is not meritocratic. In terms of equality, what we want to find at an elite university is evidence of social integration and efficacy, regardless of class or racial/ethnic background. If we lived in a society where one's class status did not matter for one's lived outcomes, then researchers at SVU would be unable to find differences in behavior, thoughts and feelings across classes. Instead I find that class inequality is being reproduced along the three major class cleavages. Getting into SVU is not enough to guarantee freedom of opportunity in experience at SVU.

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APPENDIX A.

Table 1. *Characteristics of the Three Major Student Groups*

Class	Typical Characteristics
Upper	Students are only eligible for loan-based financial aid. At least one parent has a high-status, well-paying occupation, with a lot of autonomy, such as owning a business. One parent may stay at home. Both parents are educated. Students most likely attended private school at some point in their schooling. A few attended a public school that is considered top-notch.
Middle	Students are eligible for some form of need-based assistance, such as work-study. Often both students and parents are taking out loans. Parents have middle-status occupations, such as middle management, parents may or may not be college educated. Students likely attended public schools their entire schooling career.
Lower	Students are eligible for need-based aid and/or have received scholarships based on financial need. Often parents are struggling financially and have occupations with low prestige, little autonomy and low-wages. Some parents are unemployed. Students may describe that they were on social assistance growing up. Students are likely to describe their schooling as impoverished.

- i This pseudonym will be used throughout this paper so as to maintain the confidentiality of the school.
- ii This and similar statistics were gathered directly from SVU publications and thus will not be specifically cited so as to maintain the confidentiality of the school.
- iii Does the student feel they have time to participate in the on-campus activities that they would like to participate in, including, but not limited to clubs, parties and athletic events? If students did not describe obstacles that prevented them from attending social events on campus, they were seen as advantaged in this realm. Conversely, they were seen as disadvantaged if they readily described obstacles which prevented them from attending these events.
- iv Does the student feel connected to the spirit community at SVU? Students were coded as advantaged on this aspect if they spoke positively about being a member of the spirit family or otherwise demonstrated a feeling of connectedness to the spirit family. Students were seen as not feeling connected to the spirit family if they spoke poorly about the spirit community or otherwise described some form of aversion towards this community.
- v Does the student have a strong system of support currently in place? Students were seen as advantaged if they described on-campus connections such as friends, faculty or other institutional support. How extensive is their social safety net? Students were coded as disadvantaged in this category if they failed to describe anyone they could turn to on campus.