



Après nous, le déluge

The Psychological Influences of Social Status.

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Introduction

Après nous, le déluge.

A sentence that I have been hearing my grandmother say as long as I can remember. According to her it is not decent to say, but let's be honest, is this not how a big part of the Western World thinks? Originally it is a French expression, attributed to Madame de Pompadour, the official mistress of King Louis XV of France which is believed to be said after 1757 during the Battle of Rossbach, which was disastrous for the French. There are two possible interpretations to this archaic statement, one "after my reign, the nation will be plunged into chaos and destruction"; or "After me, let the deluge come".

Besides this sentence my grandmother has been very inspiring to me since I was a little child. She is 91 years old, lives alone in the house she built herself. She dresses up every single day in her most fabulous outfit, the remaining 20% of her vision being used to its full potential. As she is too old to leave the house her family, who she receives visits from, are the only witnesses of her extravagance. Every morning the same ritual takes her hours. When she is sick, she doesn't go to bed because according to her; most people die in their beds. As my grandmother says: "You should not complain, but carry it". If you clean the house, you should wear a blazer and don't ever consider leaving the house without tipping your lips. She is experiencing dementia, but that doesn't stop her from having the obsessive need to control everything and especially what she wears. How come? What drives and has been driving her into this obsessive need to keep up her appearance?

I grew up in a family where there was financial freedom. Twice a year on holiday, all the kids played hockey and my sister owned a horse. Within these surroundings my mother always found it hilarious to provoke the scene a bit. With both feet on the ground, she always sewed our clothes. For example she bought a vest from a very cheap store, but she put expensive buttons on it. Suddenly it became interesting for the scene she was in. For me this is such a hilarious inspiration. My parents separated when I was 8 years old and I didn't experience the life everyone had that long. For this reason I have a different interest in certain things from my brother and sister, such as the way we express ourselves, which we always joke about. The elitist way of dress, the appearance and the psychological behavior behind it has always been fueling my creativity.

Therefore the aim of this thesis is to find answers on what psychological influence social status

has on our behavior in the Western World and how this is expressed within my family. Doing this by researching the works of American psychologist and philosopher William James and social psychologists Henri Tajfel and John Turner in order to understand our self-esteem and *The Social Identity Theory*. However it will not address research on how this could cause conflicts within groups and the opposite; *The Realistic Theory*.

To understand the origin and development of social status, this thesis will look into studies about stratified societies and class systems. However it will not address the assumptions by humankind on how social inequality started. Also it will look into the works of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu who was concerned about dynamics of power in society and his so-called '3 variations of capitol'. This thesis will not further address capitalism in general and what sustainability problems we are currently facing because of that. It will leave out research on social status behavior on social media.

In order to look at our behavior and our anxieties, this thesis will look into the works of fashion theorist Georg Simmel and his definition of fashion. Additionally to that, the work of Thorstein Veblen who was an economist and sociologist with his research on *Conspicuous Consumption* which basically is the practice of purchasing goods to show off your wealth. It will not focus on his research on advertising and the critiques he received.

Lastly the important works of Alain de Botton who is a British philosopher and author on analyzing *Status Anxiety* which Botton describes is the concern of having a presumed social position or falling back to a lower position in society. Along with casual interviews and reflections with my own family.

Understanding our Self-Esteem and Identities

What would happen if we entered a room and nobody looked up? No one would reply when you spoke and would just ignore your being? According to William James, who was an American psychologist and philosopher and wrote *The Principles of Psychology* from 1890. It will drive humanity to outrage and hopeless anger. You could say that the attention of others fuels our insecurity about the quality of our self-esteem. What other people think of us plays a big role when it comes to our self-esteem. If people laugh about my jokes, it gives me the confidence to amuse people and if people praise me it gives me a feeling of self-value.

We can define self-esteem as an individual's subjective evaluation of her or his worth as a person. In other words, it is basically how much we appreciate and like ourselves. Besides what other people think of us, many factors affect our self-esteem. Such as genetics, childhood experiences and our age, however these can't be controlled. Other factors like our strength, thoughts and personal circumstances can be managed. Therefore self-esteem is not a permanent state of mind and it changes over time.¹ According to William James, self-worth is based on two elements: our actual achievements and our aspirations. He puts it this way: self-esteem = success/preentions. Our self-esteem is dictated by how well we are doing in life because of our successes. And it is divided by how good we feel about ourselves because of our pretentions. A good self-esteem is the result of having more success than pretensions.² William James states that "With no attempt there can be no failure; with no failure no humiliation. So our self-feeling in this world depends entirely on what we *back* ourselves to be and do."³

Morris Rosenberg -who is an American social psychologist and sociologist- developed one of the most widely used measures of global self-esteem with *The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale* (RSE) in 1965. He added that self-esteem is built on self-respect and self-acceptance. In his *Society and the Adolescent Self Image* he states "When we speak of high self-esteem, then, we shall simply mean that the individual respects himself, considers himself worthy; he does not necessarily consider himself better than others, but he definitely does not consider himself worse; he does not

¹ Foroux, Darius. 2020

² James, 310, 311

³ James, 310

feel that he is the ultimate in perfection but, on the contrary, recognizes his limitations and expects to grow and improve. Low self-esteem, on the other hand, implies self-rejection, self-dissatisfaction, self-contempt. The individual lacks respect for the self he observes. The self-picture is disagreeable, and he wishes it were otherwise.”⁴

Components of this self-esteem are humans' two identities: social and personal identity. *The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior* was founded by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1979. It was published as the first chapter of *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* from Austin William and Stephen Worchel. *The Social Identity Theory* addresses the circumstances where social identity is more important than individual identity and how it influences group behavior in different ways. An individual has not just one personal self, besides its personal self it owns multiple identities adjusted and associated within a specific group and its members.⁵ *The Social Identity Theory* stems from earlier work by Henri Tajfel. In this he investigated the way in which perceptual processes lead to stereotypes and prejudices. This led him to do multiple studies where different participants were randomly assigned to groups. Their membership had no purpose or value whatsoever, yet the participants preferred the group that they were assigned to. This shows that group membership is so powerful that simply grouping people into groups is enough to make people think in terms of that particular group membership.⁶

People go through three mental stages when we talk about group formation. The first one is **Social categorisation**; This is where you see yourself as part of a group with both personal and social identities. Your personal identity is who you see yourself as and your social identity is the group you see yourself being part of. Secondly you have **social identification**; once you have a social identity you automatically perceive everyone else you meet as either part of your in-group (the ones who share the same social society as you) or the out-group. Most of your attention will automatically go to your in-group members and you will adopt their values, appearance and behavior as well as their attitude. At last there is **social comparison**. Here is where you view your social identity superior or inferior to others. This stems from the products of your in-group such as

⁴ Rosenberg, 31

⁵ Tajfel. Turner, 7-24

⁶ Qtd. by Janse, B. 2020

their utterances and their attitude which are better than the products of an out-group.⁷ And here come the prejudices!

Tajfel and Turner argue that self-esteem is at the core of our social identity. Our satisfaction about our social identity depends on others. Humans need to feel good about themselves so we need to feel good about the groups that we belong to. In order to feel good we always start to compare. Social comparison doesn't happen to out-groups who aren't relevant to your life.⁸ The feeling of insecurity about our values doesn't come as an independent thought, it comes from comparing our situation with people who we see as equal.⁹ The feeling of being something else than our being- which is a feeling we get if people who we see as equal have more success- leads to insecurity.¹⁰ If we would be small and we would be surrounded by people who are also small in our group, we wouldn't complain about something like height. Yet if someone in our group becomes a little longer, even if it is just a tiny bit it will increase the feeling of being uncomfortable and unsatisfied. Even though we didn't become one millimeter smaller.¹¹

People complain about "cliques" because that specific group feels superior to everyone else around them and don't let others join their circle.¹² Tajfel explains that people from that specific group base their self-esteem on the status of their social circle. They over-value the products of the in-group such as how funny they are or how stylish they dress themselves, at the same time they under-value the products of the out-group by looking down on them.¹³ Take football fans for example, if you support a football team your self-esteem is linked to the success of the team. If the team wins you feel good, even when it loses you can feel good by believing fans of other teams are inferior to you. Football fans show social identification by acting the same way and wearing the same clothes.¹⁴ To maintain a positive and good feeling about your self-esteem people are highly motivated to emotionally invest in their in-group. This way their self-respect is connected to the social status of their group. A positive evaluation about someones in-group with relevant

⁷ Qtd. by Janse, B. 2020. 13-19

⁸ Tajfel. Turner, 22

⁹ Botton, Alain. 2004. 53

¹⁰ Botton, Alain. 2004. 54

¹¹ Botton, Alain. 2004. 55

¹² Qtd. by Rowe, Jonathan.

¹³ Tajfel. Turner, 20-24

¹⁴ Tajfel. Turner, 24

out-groups results in a positive social identity. If this is not the case in general people will mentally go over these three strategies according to Henri Tajfel and John Turner.¹⁵

Individual mobility

In case a person doesn't particularly like its group that person could leave the group and join a group with higher social status. This doesn't change anything about the identity of the group but it will have a big impact on the social status of the person itself.¹⁶

Social Creativity

Members of a group can improve the status of their group by changing an element of the comparison between other groups. This works in a way to look and compare other groups with a different perspective. Also they could compare their group with another one which has a lower social status.

Social Competitiveness

Members of a group can increase the status of the group by together improving their situation. In this case they compete directly with another group with the main goal to turn their social positions around.¹⁷

We need to realize that we should develop a sense of personal identity separated from our social identity and base our self-esteem on that. In that way we would compare less or don't have to look down on one another. It is challenging but it is important to remember that social identity is a perception and not a fact. You only belong to the groups you believe you belong to. We should expand our social identities and see ourselves and the people around us as all members of a bigger in-group, in that way the social comparison will stop.

¹⁵ Qtd. by Janse, B. 2020

¹⁶ Tajfel. Turner, 19

¹⁷ Tajfel. Turner, 19,20

Development of Social Status

Squandering. It is marked in human nature. If we would buy a red Ferrari we would do it to impress others and gain respect from them. Same goes for a peacock when it shows its feathers. The fact that a monkey's behavior stems from the status of other monkeys in its group is not so different compared to human behavior.¹⁸ According to an experiment of Dr Caroline Zink of the US National Institute of Mental Health, people who see themselves as someone with a higher social status would show more brain activity once they look at information about someone who also has a higher social status.¹⁹ She states “the way we interact with and behave around other people is often determined by their social status relative to our own, and therefore information regarding social status is very valuable to us.”²⁰

Social status is the standing one holds in society based on prestige. Also it is affected by a number of factors such as wealth, family background, education.²¹ Stratified societies refer to society categorization of people ranked into groups based on for example wealth, race, occupation, derived power (social and political) and income.²² In some stratified societies consisting of a hierarchical social structure people are divided into social classes that are valued differently in society.²³ Certain types of society have a specific social class system where there is no social mobility and therefore no opportunity to change one's social status, this we can call 'The Caste System'.²⁴ In other, although stratified, there are more opportunities to change in social status. This can go through education, talent and for example marriage.²⁵ However in my belief a truly equitable society requires that all members are equally valued regardless of their wealth, income level, race, power or occupation.

According to Alan Parkin in his article on *Social Class: Historical Origin and Psychological Influences* from 1962. During the centuries when Greek and Roman society were passing from a

¹⁸ Qtd. by BBC on the internet, 2011

¹⁹ Zink et al. 2008

²⁰ Qtd. by BBC on the internet, 2011

²¹ New World Encyclopedia Contributors, 2008

²² Conerly. Tonja. R et al. 2021. 236

²³ New World Encyclopedia Contributors, 2008

²⁴ Conerly. Tonja. R et al. 2021. 236

²⁵ New World Encyclopedia Contributors, 2008

gentilitial to a class structure, Britain was being overrun by the Celts - which was a collection of tribes with origins in Europe- and lived within a culture of tribal barbarism. Then with the coming of the Anglo-Saxons -who were a cultural group inhabited in England in the early middle ages- celtic tribalism was driven into the mountains of Scotland and Ireland. Here is when a new base arises of serf, knight and lord. Which played a big role in the development in the transition to civilization.²⁶ If we look at (img 1) in the article of Alan Parkin we can see that the structure of class appeared at the rise of urban civilization in Europe. Human culture has been passing through three stages from savagery, through barbarism to civilization. It appeared to be a social response of tribal members being attracted to the city and the abandonment of old rules. This first happened with the agricultural revolution and later came the urban revolution. The class structure is a social response to those changed conditions.²⁷

According to evolutionary psychologists, it is in our nature to strive for social status, throughout the whole evolution of humanity this has increased the chance of reproductive success.²⁸ The point is that people with a higher social status had more influence on other people to gain better access to several resources which were necessary to survive. It appeared that in tribal societies social status depends on the size of its posterity, however this disappeared during the technical revolution according to the research from Joost van de Brake in his master thesis on sociology from 2013.²⁹

Besides social status referring to the honor or prestige to one's positions in society it may also refer to a rank or position that one holds in a group. Social status is determined in different ways. You can either earn your social status by your own achievements; this is known as **achieved status**. Alternatively you can inherit your position or rank in the social hierarchy; this is known as **ascribed status**. An ascribed status can also be defined as one that is fixed for you as a person when you are born, like your gender and socioeconomic background. Social status is a blend of two types of status where ascribed status influence achieved status. For example if a child is born into a high-income family household it is more likely to be exposed to the pressure of familial emphasis on education and therefore more likely to get into an elite university. Ascribed status and

²⁶ Parkin, 180

²⁷ Parkin, 181

²⁸ Rossano, Matthew J. 2002

²⁹ Brake, 2013. 14

achieved status both accumulate into the social status of an individual and they both accumulate in the system of social stratification where individuals are ranked in terms of their perceived value to society. The higher your income is the higher you are ranked at the top and the lower incomes are at the bottom.³⁰

Max Weber (1864-1920) who was a prominent German social theorist, concludes that there are three primary components to social stratification: property, prestige and power. Property stands for material possessions and following life changes. Prestige refers to the esteem or reputation of someone's social position. Weber uses power to stand for the ability to do what you want regardless of the will of others. According to Weber these "three P"s combine to produce social stratification.³¹ However, according to Pierre Bourdieu who continued to theorize social status in the twentieth century states that social capital is just as significant a factor in social status as economic capital. Bourdieu means that indicating someone's class is not limited to how much money one has, but could be indicated to someone's cultural taste which one acquires at the beginning of his youth. These tastes are influenced by class. For example the taste for classical music and foie gras are typical signals of being raised in a higher social class. Therefore social stratification is demonstrated by economic class and the cultural preferences it entails.

In his *Forms of Capital* he argues that the more capital people have the higher their social position is. According to Bourdieu there are two kinds of capital: social and cultural capital. Cultural capital is what you have and what you know and social capital is about the amount and quality of your relationship with others. These relationships are either for you to start with and to maintain, however there are also relationships that are assigned to you. People with more social capital are more wanted by others, having them as a part of your network means that you also gain more social capital. People with less social capital are therefore less wanted because you can benefit less from them. According to Bourdieu social and economic capital depends on cultural capital. If you have a lot of cultural capital you can easily gain more social and economic capital.³²

From a young age our social group, such as family, school and friends plays a big role in our

³⁰ LibreTexts, 8035

³¹ Qtd, by CliffsNotes; Qtd. LibreTexts. 8035

³² Bourdieu. 1986. 241-258

development. Through the socialization process the norms, values and habits of the social group become our own. Socialization is the process where people are taught to be proficient members of a society. It describes how people come to understand societal norms, expectations, and societal values. It is a sociological process through socializing.³³ Socialization has three main stages. It starts with primary socialization from infancy which is influenced by family members. Secondary socialization is influenced by school, social groups and the media. At last there is adult socialization which is influenced by parenthood, careers and marriage.³⁴ At a young age our social group consists of parents and family, but when becoming an adult our social group becomes more and more important. Therefore our social status is determined by our social group. Based on stereotypes, personality and our own behavior we create an implicit as well as explicit opinion about others. Popularity is one specific type of social status and it is something which we have to deal with from an early stage in life.³⁵ According to Antonius Cillessen who is a professor at the Radboud University, Nijmegen who researches social status and social behavior with kids and adolescents. Popularity is a concept based on multiple aspects. Sociometric popularity reflects on how other people like a person and on the other hand you have perceived popularity which shows the social visibility of a specific group. It shows who is seen as popular. People who are sociometric popular are seen as kind, social and thoughtful, while people who are perceived popular are seen as dominant, manipulative and aggressive. Therefore we can distinguish that for example, children who are popular are not necessarily kind and children who are kind are not necessarily popular.³⁶

Moreover, according to Steven Nock and Peter Rossi social status exists on an individual level as well on a collective level. The individual level is about someone's personal achievements and the collective level is about the characteristics of social status over the whole group. When someone from a group has a good social position, it empowers the whole group because other people can see access to that same level.³⁷

There are multiple ways to gain a higher social status according to Joost van de Brake. A higher social status could depend on an economic position but also the results from a level of education.

³³ Little, William et al. 141

³⁴ Ion, Alexandru, 2022

³⁵ Engels, Maaïke. 2015

³⁶ Cillessen. Rose, Amanda J. 2005. 102-105; Engels, Maaïke. 2015

³⁷ Nock, Rossi. 1978. 565-590

Other ways could be the practice of a difficult or important career, or being very good at something, being important as well as being physically attractive.³⁸

While the initial reason to strive for social status has disappeared over the years in western society, the evolutionary fact remains that we still strive for social status itself. This because it has too many advantages, social status gives us a higher prestige which offers the opportunity to influence others. The entire oeuvre of striving for a higher social status shows two sides; it brings happiness and welfare to the ones who own it while at the same time people who do not own it have less life satisfaction and less better health.

³⁸ Brake. 2013. 15

Consumption and Fashion as a symbol for social status

Fashion and consumption play a big role in influencing our modern psyche. It shapes an important part of our daily consumption decisions but it is also a central component of almost all daily events. It influences what people wear, where they eat, the way they decorate their house and the way they communicate and inherently the very nature of our thinking. The act of displaying ostentatious wealth is to gain status and reputation in society. This is what we call conspicuous consumption.³⁹

The Theory of Conspicuous Consumption was first coined by the American sociologist and economist Thorstein Veblen in 1899 with his book *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. In order to understand his point of view you must be aware of the fact that Veblen wrote this theory from a very privileged position in society. In his book Veblen argues that the need to consume goods in order to show off your wealth goes back to the tribal period; however the objects of consumption have changed since then, the concept of showing pecuniary strength within this ownership has essentially remained the same. According to Veblen there is a direct relationship between a person's material possessions and their status in society. The pecuniary strength of an individual portrayed honor and esteem in a community with lavish consumption of luxury goods.⁴⁰ Veblen explains "The basis on which good reputation in any highly organized industrial community ultimately rests is pecuniary strength; and the means of showing pecuniary strength, and so of gaining or retaining a good name, are leisure and a consumption of goods".⁴¹ Therefore people consume conspicuously for two main reasons, to be recognized by their peers and to achieve a higher social status in society.⁴² However, James Dusenberry, who was an American economist, claimed in 1967 that people purchase goods and services to preserve their self-esteem and keep up with social expectations of their groups.⁴³ Which makes sense if we look back at the work of Henri Tajfel and John Turner on social identity within groups in chapter 1. However in my belief the products that we consume are also a part of our personal identity as well as our social identity. Especially when it comes to the way we dress, it is the way we identify ourselves opposite to

³⁹ Corporate Finance Institute, 2021

⁴⁰ Corporate Finance Institute, 2021

⁴¹ Veblen, 40

⁴² Corporate Finance Institute, 2021

⁴³ Mason, Roger, 553-572

others. Ronald E. Goldsmith who is a Professor at the Florida State University and teaches consumer behavior and marketing research, asserts in his paper: *Status Consumption in Consumer Behavior: Scale Development and Validation* from 1999 that the desire to gain status or social prestige from the acquisition and consumption of goods is an important motivating force that influences a wide range of consumer behavior. The more someone is seeking social status, the more someone will engage in behaviors such as the consumption of status symbols that will in the end increase their status.⁴⁴

Thorstein explains “From the foregoing survey of the growth of conspicuous leisure -which refers to those behaviors pursued during nonwork time, that provide tangible evidence of status, consumption and the time that this was written in- it appears that the utility of both alike for the purposes of reputability lies in the element of waste that is common to both. In the one case it is a waste of time and effort, in the other it is a waste of goods”.⁴⁵ Both methods are a way of showing your wealth and both are accepted as equal. Choosing between the two is just a matter of advertising opportunity for as far as it can be influenced, other influences could also stem from different norms and values from a different source. The question remains which of these methods will have the most influence on others.⁴⁶ Veblen explains “So long as the community or social group is small enough and compact enough to be effectually reached by common notoriety alone that is to say, so long as the human environment to which the individual is required to adapt himself in respect of reputability is comprised within his sphere of personal acquaintance and neighborhood gossip — so long the one method is about as effective as the other. Each will therefore serve about equally well during the earlier stages of social growth”.⁴⁷ But when the differentiation has gone further and it became necessary to reach a wider human environment, consumption starts to win over leisure. This specifically applies to the more economic stage in humanity. Communication methods and the mobility of society now expose an individual to the observation of many people who have no other way to judge its reputation than by showing off its goods, while standing under direct observation of others. Therefore if we want to impress the observers and retain our self-complacency under their observation our pecuniary strength has to

⁴⁴ Goldsmith, 41-50

⁴⁵ Veblen, 40

⁴⁶ Veblen, 40,41

⁴⁷ Veblen, 41

be as clearly understood and visibly shown.⁴⁸

According to Veblen “Conspicuous consumption claims a relatively larger portion of the income of the urban than of the rural population, and the claim is also more imperative”. Which results that in order to keep up a decent appearance the former way of living hand-to-mouth disappears to a greater extent. Therefore farmers dress less modish and are as well less urban in their manners, than a city’s family. The effectiveness to influence others is more decided in the city. The standard of decency is higher with class for class and a decent appearance becomes a requirement. Therefore consumption becomes a larger standard in the city than in the countryside.⁴⁹

Veblen claims that goods consumed tend to be wasteful. He states “Throughout the entire evolution of conspicuous expenditure, whether of goods or of service or human life, runs the obvious implication that in order to effectually mend the consumer’s good fame it must be an expenditure of superfluities.” -which means a great amount of unnecessary things-. “In order to be reputable it must be wasteful.”⁵⁰ We wouldn’t find joy or satisfaction in the consumption of the bare necessities in life. Veblen calls it waste because these expenses do not serve human life or the human well-being on the whole. It is not called waste, or misdirection of effort from the consumer’s standpoint. If a person chooses to consume it is of its relative utility for him, it has the utility by virtue of his preference. It often happens that an element of the higher standard of living, which in the first place is seen as waste, becomes in the eye of the consumer a necessity of life. And in this way it becomes a habit that any other items or expenses become indispensable to the consumer. According to Veblen items that illustrate this manner are silver tableware, waiter’s services, carpets and tapestries, silk hats, starched linen and many articles of jewelry and dress.⁵¹

Georg Simmel who was a philosopher and sociologist is seen as the first trying to theorize fashion in his article: Fashion in the *American Journal of Sociology* in 1957. I have to address the fact that Simmel wrote his theory from the perspective of someone who had a higher social position in society with wealthy surroundings. His research was mostly based on his own experiences which

⁴⁸ Veblen, 41

⁴⁹ Veblen, 41

⁵⁰ Veblen, 45

⁵¹ Veblen, 46

he wrote at the top of the colonial era according to Sandra Niessen who is a writer and professor on the anthropology of fashion and shows the importance of revising fashion. Simmel's theory is the main reason why we are facing so many issues with fast fashion today.⁵²

According to Simmel fashion is a social fact which derives from basic tension specific on the social condition of a human being. The need to imitate somebody else and the tendency to distinguish yourself from others. It unites those of a social class and separates them from others. The elite are the ones who initiate fashion (what we now call a trend and are more runned by big fashion maisons) and when the mass tries to copy this, the elite will abandon the trend and move on to the next which accelerates the increase of wealth.⁵³ Economists who observe this fashion phenomena could call this the “snob demand”. We could call a consumer who stops buying a product, when the price lowers too much or when the mass also has the product a “snob”.⁵⁴ Veblen also coined it as the “bandwagon effect”.⁵⁵ When a product is sold more because of simple imitation and the “reverse bandwagon effect” explains when a “snobbish” consumer stops buying a product because the mass is also buying it.⁵⁶ Every consumer expense is influenced by irrational factors, either by social imitation and what Simmel calls the need for distinction, which is the contrary of imitation.⁵⁷ This brings me back to the works of Henri Tajfel and John Turner which explain that social comparison could lead to the need to imitate others.

The impulse we get to imitate others is not directed to random people, we try to imitate people who are in a way superior to us. Therefore Simmel explains that fashion is a product of class distinction and in order for it to exist the society must be stratified. Some of the members have to be perceived as inferior and superior. The inferior one should imitate his direct superior and never the other way around.⁵⁸ Therefore we could say that the “latest” fashion in its social forms and aesthetic judgment only affects the upper class. Simmel states that “fashion does not exist in tribal and classless societies”.⁵⁹ Because social hierarchy is absent and hierarchy is the driving power

⁵² Niessen. 2020

⁵³ Simmel, 541

⁵⁴ Simmel, 544; Benvenuto, Sergio. 2000 1.5

⁵⁵ Leibenstein, H. 1950.184

⁵⁶ Leibenstein, H. 1950.184

⁵⁷ Benvenuto, Sergio. 2000. 1.5

⁵⁸ Simmel, 544; Benvenuto, Sergio. 2000. 1.5

⁵⁹ Simmel, 544

behind changes of style which we now call trend. Moreover he states that the way how we dress in Europe is different from other dress systems across the world.⁶⁰

American Fashion Theorist Linda Welters and Abby Lillethun criticized Simmel's theories in the book; *Fashion History: A Global View* from 2018 and showed that change with different speeds do appear in different dress systems on earth.⁶¹ It is not only Europe as Simmel claimed. I can vouch for that after traveling for two years around the world. I have witnessed that there definitely is hierarchy and dress systems in tribal communities and that it does change from time to time. Because of this, Simmel's claim on fashion caused a giant gap between the West and the rest of the world, which still has a toxic effect on how we see fashion today.

⁶⁰ Niessen. 2020

⁶¹ Welters. Lillethun. 2018

Status Anxiety

It seems that we live in a society where our value is being measured by others based on our material wealth and our social prestige. When we lack appreciation from our surroundings or when we are too much dependent on the opinion of others it gives us a feeling that we fall short. This makes us want to protest, therefore we put so much energy into what you could say pretending, or showing something which is not real or not necessarily needed. This is deeply rooted in human behavior. Everyone in the Western society gets to deal with these feelings one way or another. It doesn't matter if you live in the countryside or if you live in the city, because of the internet and social media nowadays these feelings haunt us unconsciously as well as consciously. That makes me wonder, what is it we fear?

According to Alain de Botton, a British contemporary philosopher who first broadly conceptualized *Status Anxiety* in 2004. Status anxiety is the haunted feeling which can influence a big part of our lives where we feel not capable of living up to the standard of success that is asked from society. Therefore we fear dignity and lack of respect. We fear that we will end up at the bottom of the ladder or sink even deeper.⁶² According to the words of Martin Day and Anna Keshabyan from the Department of Psychology at Memorial University of Newfoundland, status anxiety is worsened by economic inequality and negatively affects our well-being.⁶³ But where does this feeling come from? The feeling of status anxiety is caused by the experiences we endure in our work such as dismissal, promotions and for example friends who you think have more successful careers. Next to that we tend to get the feeling to envy others which is related to the feeling of status anxiety. We do not speak about it and that is why this feeling keeps haunting us. The reason why we worry so much about our place in society is because our self-image depends for a big part on the way other people see us.⁶⁴ This mainly affects our social identity as explained in the first chapter. However it is possible to connect more with your personal identity and focus on what you feel you need to be successful in life. If we are not royals, to gain status is a challenge as well as to maintain it. The moment we fail, we tend to feel humiliated or ashamed, because at that moment we were not capable of showing the world what we were destined for.

⁶² Botton, 7

⁶³ Day. Keshabyan, 2020

⁶⁴ Botton, 8,9

We look at ourselves with shame and the successful other with slight bitterness.

Status anxiety is a powerful instigator to make us suffer. It sometimes can be useful because it motivates us to show our talents, however if we do not control this, it could be damaging to our mental health. Botton's advice on how to deal with this condition is to make things clear and communicate about it.⁶⁵ I couldn't agree more. This is a feeling I have been suffering from since I was little and with every change or direction in life, where a choice was needed it appears again. The feeling of what other people think of me and especially the feeling of what you think you should do instead of what you personally want. We have to understand what psychologically drives this phenomenon of this fear in order to control it and to be able to talk about it.

Lack of love

How can a word which normally is only desired from an elder or loved ones, apply to the desire we need from the world around us? The known reasons why we seek higher status is the desire for money, fame and influence. However it would be accurate to summarize our aspiration with a word that is rarely used in political theory, which is; love.

When our basic necessities are guaranteed, our urge to achieve a more successful position would have less to do with accumulating material possessions or expressing power, it would have more to do with the amount of love we can expect thanks to the high status. Perhaps we could define love as a form of respect and as the receptivity of one person to the existence of another. When we feel loved, we feel cared for, our present is noticed by those around us and our opinions matter. And us humans thrive for such attention, that is why the lack of love affects us so much.⁶⁶ In a perfect world we would care less about the opinion of others and it wouldn't influence us. We would know what we're worth. You could imagine that our ego or our self-esteem is like a broken balloon, which in order to stay up it needs love from those around it.⁶⁷ We have to deal with the feeling of disregard towards ourselves which causes an insecure situation where in the end the relevance of our being depends on the attitude of the society we live in. All things considered, it is not a surprise that the main reasons why we are fixed on the place we take into this world are emotional as well as material. It will in the end also determine the amount of love we may achieve as well as how much we love ourselves in order not to lose our self-worth. If we look at (img 2) we

⁶⁵ Botton, 8,9

⁶⁶ Botton, 15,16

⁶⁷ Botton, 20

can see the consequences of love and disregard according to Botton. It is important to realize that love towards our confidence and trusting in our own character is indispensable.⁶⁸

Snobbery

Even though the respect from others is indispensable to our self-esteem we could still question why respect is reserved to people with a higher status. Where does the urge come from to admire the greatest and not even see the minor ones? This brings me to the second most important cause of status anxiety. As I already described the behavior of a snob concerning consumption in chapter 3, we could say that without the phenomena of snobbery there would still be a gap between the rich and the poor, however there wouldn't be negative contempt and indifference towards another group.⁶⁹ William Thackeray who was an English novelist explains in his; *Book of Snobs* from 1848 that since then, the last twenty five years snobs are known everywhere and that the awareness of equality raised the nonacceptance of discriminatory behavior of snobs.⁷⁰ According to Botton the characteristics of a snob is not simply discriminatory behavior but the unrelenting conviction that one's social rank and one's worth as a human being are in perfect harmony. The fact that the presence of a snob affects us in feeling sad or nervous stems from being aware how much of our personal identity is of value for their behavior towards us, which is none.⁷¹

Expectations

In the history of mankind, Western countries had the fastest and most impactful change of life standards. Between 1700 and 1800 the British agriculture industry almost doubled which increased capital and manpower which flowed to the cities and became operational and active for trade and industry. Cities experienced massive growth. Goods and services which were normally only for the elite became available to everyone. According to Botton, Daniel Defoe, who is seen as the founder of English Novels, traveled through South-England in 1745 and witnessed the openings of stores with very attractive window displays and products. This caused that different styles were evolving in time, for example in womenswear in England 1753 the color was purple, in 1754 men chose white linen with a pink pattern and in 1755 it became pigeon grey.⁷² If we look at

⁶⁸ Botton, 21

⁶⁹ Botton, 25,26

⁷⁰ Botton, 26

⁷¹ Botton, 27

⁷² Botton, 43

(img 3) we can spot Madame de Pompadour who was an avid consumer of lace and most especially French and Flemish lace. Which was the most sought for and therefore the costliest. These materials were bought in order to let tailors create the newest fashion and all was made to measure.⁷³ In the nineteenth century the British consumer revolution evolved and soon enough in Europe and America giant warehouses were built. Products were not only available for royals. In 1902, Chicago at the opening of Marshall Fields warehouse, Gordon Selfridges -who was also a man with a high social rank- explained: "We built this amazing store for normal people".⁷⁴ Aiming that their department store was open to everyone, it wasn't meant for rich, pecuniary strength and posh people. Over time, more often rich and poor read the same books, listened to the same radio and watched the same movies. The differences became smaller because of mass production for cheaper clothes and home improvements. The achievements of two thousand years Western civilization are well known, there has been an immense growth of wealth, food supplies, consumer goods, scientific knowledge, life expectations and economic chances. These changes have increased status anxiety for the average western citizen. The fear of missing out on something. It is not a surprise that the great political and consumer revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth century led to our psychological uncertainty, even though it was greatly benefiting the material conditions of people.

Meritocracy

Because of the unmistakable material revolution that has happened in the West we could say that in today's time we have strong and painful judgments on the cause of poverty and of the value of someone in that position for society.⁷⁵ This development is another reason why we could suffer from status anxiety. But how did we get there? According to Botton between around 30 after Christ when Jezus started with his preachings and the second half of the 20th century, three stories developed in the west about the human utility of usefulness.

First story: the poor are not responsible for their situation and are most useful for society.

They believed that classes were dependent on each other. So the lives of poor farmers were not less respectfully as from royals. People were aware that classes would disappear without the

⁷³ Majer, Michele. 2021

⁷⁴ Botton, 44

⁷⁵ Botton ,77

necessity of farmers because wealth was created by the working class.⁷⁶

Second Story: Low status has no moral implications. From a Christian perspective neither wealth nor poverty were an accurate guide to moral dignity. Jesus was the most exalted, most blessed human on earth however he was poor.⁷⁷

Third Story: The rich are sinful and immoral and they are rich by stealing from the poor

Between 1754 and 1989 the poor were reminded that the rich were immoral thieves and that their privileges stem from robbery and deceit. Furthermore, Jean-Jacques Rousseau who was a Swiss philosopher and writer, introduced a new story in 1754 where the upper class manipulated the poor so that no matter how determined they were, they couldn't improve their faith for the future. Their only hope was public protest and revolution.⁷⁸

These three stories gave comfort in their own way to the ones with lower status. Unfortunately in around the 18th century three uncomfortable stories came along with the material revolution.⁷⁹

First Story: The rich are useful and not the poor

Bernard Mandeville who was an English doctor published his: *The Fable of the Bees* in 1714 where he asserts that the Rich are more useful to society, because with their expenses (in trading, industry and agriculture) they created jobs for those who stood below them. If we judge someone on its value we should look at their effect on others.⁸⁰

Second Story: Someone's status has indeed moral implications

For centuries people believed that one's social position depends on one's family instead of one's skills. Halfway through the eighteenth century people started to criticize the differences between rank and value of humanity because Western Nations were occupied with Royals who weren't capable of ruling the country. The new ideology of meritocracy evolved in schools and universities becoming accessible for all civilians regardless of their income and more equal possibilities at

⁷⁶ Botton, 77-80

⁷⁷ Botton, 81

⁷⁸ Botton, 81-84

⁷⁹ Botton, 85

⁸⁰ Botton, 86-90

work. The meritocracy ideal gave tons of people the opportunity to evolve themselves.⁸¹

Third Story: The poor are sinful and corrupt, and their poverty is due to their own stupidity.

For those with a lower status the ideology of meritocracy had a more negative effect. If successful people earned their success, the non successful people earned their failures. A lower status was now seen as what someone deserved, because of meritocracy everyone had equal chances. If you were not successful it was because of your own stupidity.⁸²

Dependency

Modern society's ambition was to take away inherited privileges as well as the inherent lack of privileges, so that one's rank stems from their personal successes, which was mostly based on financial success. Today's status is rarely stemming from one's immutable identity which was passed on for generations. In this fast economic society, only one's achievements may count for one's status, therefore thanks to the nature of this economy, insecurity is one of the main characteristics for aspiring for status.⁸³

According to Botton we can divide this dependency into five factors and five reasons not to count on a coveted position in the hierarchy:

The dependency of unstable talent. In order to create success or a certain achievement we are depending on talent and the certainty we can rule that talent. However, we can't control talent. Sometimes it's there, sometimes it disappears and could leave a broken career.⁸⁴

The dependency of fortune. Our status is also dependent on a range of favorable conditions. Because of luck we sometimes get the job, with the right skill, at the right moment. However it became unacceptable to use luck as an explanation for your life circumstances.⁸⁵

The dependency of an employer. The unpredictability of our situation becomes worse because

⁸¹ Botton, 90-99

⁸² Botton, 99-104

⁸³ Botton, 107-109

⁸⁴ Botton, 108

⁸⁵ Botton, 109-110

mostly our status depends on the priorities of an employer and the difficulty in climbing up a company's pyramid.⁸⁶

The dependency of the profit opportunities of an employer and the dependency of the world economy. Our work is determinative in how much respect and attention we get. When you get the question of what you do for work, our confident answer depends on the ups and downs of the economy, struggles in employment, luck.⁸⁷ Even though our need for love as I explained earlier hasn't changed. The disproportion between our desires and uncertain circumstances in the world are an immovable fifth reason for our status anxiety.

⁸⁶ Botton, 110-114

⁸⁷ Botton, 116-118

My Family and surroundings

It feels like yesterday that my grandfather who was disabled and not able to speak at that time, still kept pointing at the holes and rips in my jeans, which I created myself. He always did that with a big smile on his face, knowing that I knew he secretly loved and enjoyed the fact that I dressed differently according to what was “normal” and worn by the rest of my family. I used to dress myself when I was little in all the fabulous clothes of my grandmother. Witnessing her morning rituals as a child has always been fascinating to me. Growing older I started to realize that behind these rituals lies an amount of stories to discover. Having these conversations during the years has been a big part of our connection which continues today.

To discover these stories I interviewed my family while having casual talks. Looking at (img 4), I am aware that my creativity doesn't come as a surprise since my mother has been sewing all of our clothes when we were younger. She used to always dress us in oversized clothing. Which at one point I started to dislike. I wanted to dress differently. Where my sister was wearing flats, ribbed-fabric skirts and a Burberry scarf as you can see in (img 5). I wanted to wear high red heeled boots with a shirt with giant pointy sleeves. I believe we all reach this point in life as children, only to find out now that my way of dress is exactly as my mother used to dress us. Oversized.

Being sick at home means for most people to lie down in bed with their pajamas. Not for my grandmother, who wears a zebra striped, tricot twin suit. With a flower print pink shirt underneath, necklaces and earrings and don't forget about the sunglasses. (Img 6). Asking her why she doesn't rest is followed by her so known statement: “Most people die in their beds” and continues smoking her cigarette. My grandmother only has visits left from our own family and on a casual sunny Tuesday afternoon my mother and I visited my grandmother by surprise. To only witness her sitting in the garden all by herself in one of her most exceptional outfits attended by a glass of wine, blew my mind. (Img 7). This sets the tone for my graduation collection as I was eager to find out where this behavior was coming from. As she explains during our “casual talk” her father had the occupation as an alderman and their appearance was very important. She was allowed to have friends from poorer neighborhoods, however her parents made it clear that her friend was

from a different class. I am happy to hear in the end, that she followed her heart and became friends with whoever she wanted. That considered, I can imagine the unconscious impact it had on her which is shown in her behavior at a later stage. During her youth she attended a lot of parties with her parents where the women were only allowed to wear long dresses and the men should wear jacquets. It is clear that she was raised with the utmost importance to be properly dressed at all times. She explains that during the years she became more modern in what she wears, however the obsessive need to keep up with her appearance is deeply rooted in her character.

You can imagine when it comes to my mother she had no escape in being raised the same way as my grandmother did. My mother, who is 61, lives in Ede, our hometown. She never took off her pearls (img 8 and img 9) and spends her days embroidery, painting and doing voluntary work. She makes it clear she grew up with the importance of social status and showing of your wealth. The first example she gives me is that they had a piano in the living room, only as a symbol for a high social status. It is not a surprise my grandmother told her the same things as her parents said about people from a different class. Even if my grandmother didn't agree on it that time, the unconscious effect of being raised that way will show itself later. However my mother also chose her surroundings not based on class, but with whoever she felt good at. At a certain age she started to turn against what was expected of her in her way of dress. She found herself in the middle of the so-called "drop-out culture" or "counterculture" between the 1960 and 1970. Which was a period where values and norms of behavior seemed to break down, particularly amongst young people. They became highly motivated activists for the civil rights and antiwar movements. Young people simply "dropped out" and separated themselves from their background class.⁸⁸ This was expressed in a way that my mother started wearing cowboy boots, rib velvet trousers and started to pimp her own jeans. This was accepted, however the boots should still be from a famous brand.

Nowadays she describes her style as the English college style,(img 10) in Dutch we call this "kakkers" which is often shown in families with a high social status. For her this specific style has never been about showing off. She has a strong connection with her personal identity and her social identity is based on that. My mother doesn't own a big bank account. Therefore you could

⁸⁸ Miles. Barry.

say she has a social status according to her taste and not so much her financial success.

Which brings me back to what Bourdieu explains that social status not only stems from financial success, but also someone's taste, which develops while being raised. Even though she was raised with the importance of social status, she found it hilarious that people actually cared for that. She followed her own path in raising us with her own taste and in the end not the importance of someone's social status.

Her path led to having my sister at the age of 25. My sister, who is 36 years old, now lives in the woods after living in Amsterdam. She loves to cook and works as an allround planner. A typical phenomena as sisters is that you lend your clothing to each other, which wasn't the case when it comes to our taste back in the days. Looking at (img 11) you can see she developed the same taste as my mother while growing up. She explains while growing up social status and money was important for the group she was in. She owned a horse before the age of 16 and in the world of horses -at the level she found herself in- there's always the presence of elite behavior. This is shown in the way people dress themselves in their free time and the "Outdoor" events she attended where everything is about who owns the most expensive horse and wins the most prizes. For her this was seen as normal, however her feeling towards this specific group was that she tried to fit in, wanting to be good enough. It is clear to me that this group she is referring to felt superior to others and she had to deal with snobs, who only care about people's social identity as explained earlier. At a certain point she starts connecting more to her personal identity and doesn't let her social identity define her. She explains she doesn't feel connected anymore to that specific group and made a conscious decision to step out of that world. After this disconnection her style changes to what she feels comfortable with and the necessity to show off becomes less important, which at the same time improves her mental health.

My brother on the other hand explains that he felt more like a chameleon while growing up and still feels that way. He is 32 years old, a recent father and runs his own company in payments in the event branche in Amsterdam. He explains while growing up, he'd experience different types of groups in his surroundings and made it very clear he identified himself with his so called "gangster" type of group and the "kakkers" which he played hockey with. These days it is still important for him to keep up his appearance because of the main reason that he has to have a representative

look towards the employees at his company. However he is very much aware that he dresses differently according to the group he finds himself in. For certain in-groups like his “Event bosses” group he experiences the pressure to show off his wealth with for example his Rolex and expensive cars. Whenever he is around his so called “SaaS bosses” (software as a service) group he doesn’t feel that urge and acts more like himself, dressed in his sportswear with his Iwatch. This shows he has more social identities. His personal identity is more connected to the “SaaS bosses” group. He explains that he used to get really depressed being surrounded by people who had more financial success. Now he looks at it differently. According to him, owning a lot of money doesn’t mean being successful or having a high social status. He states “People can inherit 20 million from their daddy but still be unsuccessful”. Which shows he is aware of the term ascribed status. Looking at his own way of dress now, it is important for him to show other people he is doing well, but not anymore in a conspicuous way. This is only important for his in-group and not his out-group. However secretly he admits he likes to show off to people who’d envy him. A good example of that is having a bronzed face, meaning you take a lot of holidays!

His loving partner is 33 years old and spends her days taking care of their firstborn son and is an official work partner of my brother. She grew up in an environment where social status was really important. This was expressed in materialism such as art, cars, sports (hockey and tennis) and clothing. She was surrounded by a group who were raised with the same importance and explained that she had an ascribed status. People also looked at her that way which was different from how she saw herself. For a long time she was dressed by her mother and at a certain point she turned against her mother and chose a different style. This is what she wanted to show her in-group. She explains at the moment she became a student, you could simply not afford famous brands anymore and it became less important. Nowadays she rather spends her money on clothing which lasts longer. It is clear for her that she does love luxury. However that luxury doesn’t have to be the standard and it is important to herself not to the outside world. She describes herself as someone who doesn’t have to keep up her appearance. She also finds it not important to do so because of the work environment she is in. However she is aware that once she visits her parents or sees people who have a higher social status she does dress differently, which is rooted in the way she grew up. Enduring envy towards others who had more success is something she struggled with especially because of social media. Later, after more self development and a

more steady self-esteem it disappeared. Now it motivates her to learn from each other and to talk about it.

Having a talk with my own partner who is 29 years old, works as “Director Payments” at my brother's company, loves wine and playing soccer. He explains that social status was not important while growing up. His father -who was raised with strict christian rules- had a more recalcitrant attitude. However he did want to be seen with certain materials, yet in a different way. In his youth he attended his parents in-group which was for example at church and at the moment he went to highschool that shifted slowly. He explains he found himself in multiple in- groups, which were the “bad boys” who smoked and the group he still had from church. With his “bad boys” group, clothing played a more important role. At highschool it became important for him to look good and keep up his appearance. Which still is important to him, however now he cares less what his in-group thinks of him. He explains that he experiences more social identities within different groups.

In “our” Amsterdam bubble people are more focused on their status in society and you can feel the pressure of showing off that status. He experiences this pressure in Amsterdam with, for example, wine. It is not done anymore to bring a wine that came from the supermarket and contains sulfites to dinner parties. A typical phenomena for that is the term “premium mediocre”. Which is a term first coined by Venkatesh Rao - who is a writer- in his article *The premium Mediocre Life of Maya Millenial* in 2017. Premium mediocre basically means mediocre luxury products. Products that are not necessarily luxury but do contain the aura of luxury.⁸⁹ Jonas Kooyman who is a journalist writing on this topic gives multiple examples of these kinds of products in his article *Natuurwijn, zuurdesem, haveremelk en de middenklasse syndroom* from 2021. For example the supermarket MARQT which sells truffle chips which only contains 0,03 % truffle or a photo from a slick restaurant which looks better than it tastes.⁹⁰ It is not unknown that finding an affordable home, with a permanent contract and decent salary is hard to reach these days. Therefore we can see that in urban lifestyles, especially in Amsterdam, there is something funny (and sad at the same time) going on with this generation that develops this refined taste about food. You no longer distinguish yourself with conspicuous consumption but with a superior taste.

⁸⁹ Venkatesh, 2017

⁹⁰ Kooyman, 2021. 52

However when my partner visits our hometown in Ede he experiences a different environment, where he dresses differently. A good example of that is his Rolex, which he got as a present from my brother. He experienced the struggle of when to wear it, is it right for him to wear it and what does it say about him? He experienced the fact that his Rolex gives him status, not only towards friends but also in his work environment. It shows you're doing well financially and that you achieved something. It is a funny object, this Rolex, since my brother explained that in a later stage in life this object becomes less important.

Having friends who are buying houses, cars and having promotions at work is something that made him doubt his self-esteem. He explains he was comparing himself to his in-group and because of their development, he felt that he was doing something wrong. Even though nothing changed at his side. Now he is aware that living in the city was just simply a decision he made and therefore he couldn't afford a big house with a car. Fun fact is that, his friends thought he had a higher status because of living in the city and vice versa for them buying an actual house. At a certain point this doubt shifted to motivation, because he accepted the certain decisions he made and therefore connected more with his personal identity. Which brings me back to the works of Rosenberg on self-acceptance and self-respect. As my partner states "In the end, everything is possible".

Conclusion

Why are the things that are seen as logical, logic in the first place? What drives people? Why do they do the things they do? How come one's value is different from someone else's? These questions started to fascinate me from the age of 8. I believe it became my way of processing things. Sometimes you get an answer, sometimes you get lost in finding one. To only find out that we don't always get an answer and our only way to process that is to simply accept it.

I became aware at the end of my third year at the Academy that my family is a big inspiration to me. Unconsciously it has been for years. I never understood to the core where their habits, way of thinking, acting and behaving came from. Our differences in expressing ourselves and the fun we still have recognizing these differences. I find myself and my family walking around at a flea market, to find giant boxes filled with poker chips. No one was looking at it. I couldn't stop looking at them wondering, why is nobody as obsessed with these poker chips as I am right now? Why am I obsessed with them in the first place? These poker chips are a symbol for money. In fact it really is money. Why does nobody want it then? To come to the point of realizing that, simply putting this object in a different location, it gets a different value. Whoa! To me this was hilarious, so of course I bought them all with the weight of 300 kilos, for only 35 euros. These poker chips are an important component in my graduation collection and are turning into characteristic garments my family wears, such as pearl necklaces and spencers.

In order for me to understand where the behavior from my family comes from, I needed to learn how our self-esteem works and what kind of identities we have. It is clear that the feelings we have about our self-esteem goes hand-in-hand with the social identities we have within specific groups. As Henri Tajfel and John Turner explain, we most likely compare ourselves with people who we see as equal. This causes the feeling of insecurity about our self-esteem. However once we become aware that our self-esteem is also based on factors like our strength and thoughts who can be managed. We also become aware that self-esteem is not a permanent state of mind and it can change over time. Above all as Morris Rosenberg explains, self-esteem is based on self-respect and self-acceptance. Once we achieve that we realize that social identity is a perception and not a fact. And only then, it will increase a higher and more positive self-esteem.

Listening to the stories of my family you can clearly conclude that their way of thinking about themselves in certain groups shifts over the years. In the end they manage to connect to their personal identity and base their self-esteem on that.

We can conclude by the works of Alan Parkin and Matthew Rossano that striving for social status is marked in human nature throughout the whole evolution of humanity. With the appearance of class structure at the rise of urban civilization, the place one holds in society based on prestige became more and more important in stratified societies. Social status can be determined as achieved and ascribed status. Both accumulate in the system of social stratification where individuals are ranked in terms of their perceived value to society. Max Weber concludes, his “three P”s are needed to produce social stratification. However Pierre Bourdieu’s work shows that social capital is just as significant a factor in social status as economic capital. As he explains, indicating someone’s class is not limited to how much money one has. This we can conclude if we look at my mother for example, she doesn’t own a lot of money, but does have a cultural taste which was acquired at the beginning of her youth. Concluding the works of Steven Nock and Peter Rossi, when someone from a group has a good social position, it empowers the group because other people can see access to that same level. Therefore we still strive for social status because it has many advantages, it gives a higher prestige which offers the opportunity to influence others. To find out how this evolved during the years was necessary for me to understand the effect it has on people.

One of these effects is conspicuous consumption. The act of displaying ostentatious wealth in order to gain status and reputation in society. Whether it is with food, or clothing this behavior is always hilarious yet fascinating to me. We can conclude from the works of Thorstein Veblen, during that time, people conspicuously consume for two main reasons, to be recognized by their peers and to achieve a higher social status in society. However, according to James Dusenberry people purchase goods and services to preserve their self-esteem and keep up with social expectations of their groups. Which is also shown in the works of Henri Tajfel and John Turner on social identity within groups. As well as in the behavior of my own family as they explain they dress and behave differently according to the groups they find themselves in. I learned what psychologically drives people to act this certain way. However I believe this behavior is more

attached to your social identity and it might not give you the virtue you are looking for in life. In order to change that when it comes to clothing, it is important to learn about Georg Simmel's theory on fashion and how this is deeply rooted in our behavior. We need to become fully aware of the toxic impact it has on fashion and the world today.

All things considered, I realized the impact and that we experience a lot of fear. Alain de Botton explains that status anxiety is the haunted feeling which can influence a big part of our lives where we feel not capable of living up to the standard of success that is asked from society. Additionally, Martin Day and Anna Keshabyan conclude that status anxiety is worsened by economic inequality and negatively affects our well-being. Status anxiety is a powerful instigator to make us suffer. After listening to the stories of my family it gives me no doubt they all suffered from status anxiety. Whether it appears at work, or when being surrounded by friends, we all sometimes experience the feeling of falling short. Yet it is inspiring to see how, at some point, they manage to shift that fear into motivation. They achieve what Morris Rosenberg explained to gain a positive self-esteem, to not feel better than anyone else, but they recognize their limitations and expect themselves to grow and improve.

Looking at the behavior of my grandmother it clearly shows the impact of social status. The obsessive need to keep up her appearance is so deeply rooted, that sometimes it makes her suffer. Yet it is beautiful at the same time, she enjoys herself and is very proud of it. Being 92, dressing up every morning for hours to only sit by yourself in the garden with a cigarette and a glass of wine. That is something I would sign myself up for, for the rest of my life!

Appendix

To write my final chapter and to find an answer to my main question, I interviewed the following persons: Jantje Bunschoten, Alettha Bunschoten, Ingelou van Doorn, Lauren-Jan van Doorn, Annabel ten Hoor and Joey van de Weetering. During a private individual talk with each one of them I was able to analyze and conclude their behaviors and way of thinking. These interviews have been recorded and are available upon request.

1. *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal* 7.4 August 1962 :178-185. *Journals Sagepub*. 1810 x 600 pixels, file size: 115KB, (screenshot Macbook Pro 13) Alan parkin, "Social Class: Historical Origins and Psychological Influences." "Alan Parkin-Social class-IMG1.PNG": 3 January 2023
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/070674376200700407>

August, 1962

SOCIAL CLASS

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Aspects of Culture	Historical Stages of Culture		
	Savagery	Barbarism	Civilization
Economic	Hunting	Pastoral-Agricultural	Diversified
Community locus	Camp (nomadism)	Village	City
Social	? Gentilitial-Tribal	Gentilitial-Tribal	Class

2. Status Anxiety, 2004. 3024 X 4023 pixels, file size: 5,3MB, Apple Iphone 11 Pro. De Botton, Alain. "Botton-Lack of Love-IMG2.JPG".

De gevolgen van veronachtzaming

DE HOUDING VAN ANDEREN	ZELFBEELD
Je bent een mislukkeling	Ik ben onwaardig
Je bent onbelangrijk	Ik ben een nobody
Je bent onnozel	Ik ben dom
	<i>Ik ben slim</i>
	<i>Ik mag er zijn</i>
	<i>Ik ben de moeite waard</i>

De gevolgen van liefde

DE HOUDING VAN ANDEREN	ZELFBEELD
Je bent intelligent	Ik ben slim
Je bent belangrijk	Ik mag er zijn
Je bent succesvol	Ik ben de moeite waard
	<i>Ik ben onwaardig</i>
	<i>Ik ben een nobody</i>
	<i>Ik ben dom</i>

3. *Fashion History Timeline*. July 28, 2021. 800 x 1024 pixels, file size: 93KB. Majer, Michelle. "1750-1759". Fig. 29 - François Boucher (French, 1703 - 1770). Madame de Pompadour, 1759. Oil on canvas; 91 x 68 cm. London: The Wallace Collection, P418. Source: The Wallace Collection."Madame de Pompadour-IMG3.JPEG". 12 January 2023. <<https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1750-1759/>>



4. Annalie van Doorn, 1995, Ede, 2346×3280 pixels, file size: 2,2MB, Apple Iphone 11 Pro. (Photograph of Original Disposable Camera photo) “Mini Annie-IMG4.JPG”.



5. Annalie van Doorn, October 3, 2012. Wageningen-Hoog. 2429 × 3602 pixels, file size: 2,3MB, Apple Iphone 11 Pro. (Photograph of Original Disposable Camera photo) "Inge-Louise Bernice- IMG5.JPG".



6. Annalie van Doorn, October 2, 2022, Ede, 3024×4032 pixels, file size:2,6MB, Apple Iphone 7 Plus. (Photograph of personal archive) “Jantje Bunschoten-IMG6.JPG”.



7. Annalie van Doorn, June, 16, 2021, Ede, 3024×4032 pixels, file size:4MB, Apple Iphone 7 Plus. (Photograph of personal archive) “Jantje Sunshine-IMG7.JPG”.



8. Annalie van Doorn, 1980, Ede, 2184×3186 pixels, file size:1,7MB, Apple Iphone 11 Pro. (Photograph of Original Disposable Camera photo) “Mama Pearl-IMG8”.



9. Annalie van Doorn, 2000, Frankfurt, 2723x1905 pixels, file size:1,6MB, Apple Iphone 11 Pro. (Photograph of Original Disposable Camera photo) "Mama Pearl-IMG9".



10. Annalie van Doorn, 2012, Bennekom, 2805×1888 pixels, file size:1,6MB, Apple Iphone 11 Pro. (Photograph of Original Disposable Camera photo) "Mama style-IMG10".



11. Annalie van Doorn, 2004, Amsterdam, 2743×2172 pixels, file size:1,8MB, Apple Iphone 11 Pro. (Photograph of Original Disposable Camera photo) “Mama en Lou-IMG11”.



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