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CYES 290: Praxis Design Seminar

January 21st, 2025

What is Social Inequality?

When I think about the term "Social Inequality," It reminds me of all the times I have been called exotic in my lifetime. As a biracial woman, I am constantly questioned, sometimes not in the nicest way, about "why I am the way I am" or "where am I really from". As I have grown up and learned more about myself and where my parents are from, I have been able to not let it bother me as much, but it has still been a huge part of my life. Social Inequality is something that means a lot of different things to different people, but to me, it is something that has affected me as a biracial woman in many different ways. It is a term that has, in this day and age, been challenged and presents all in one. It affects people through race, class, and gender in very damaging ways and prevents certain groups of people from having the same opportunities as others, which is enforced by certain majorities of people.

Specifically, for me, I have had many instances where I am the minority in my race, which has made others treat me differently, and for me to "have" to educate others in what certain racial topics are and what is and isn't offensive, because I am the only Person of Color within my friend/class setting. One experience of mine that comes to mind is in second grade when we were learning about racism and important figures such as Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and Rosa Parks, and we had an activity where there were certain games put out all around the

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classroom and you could only use them if you had a certain eye color, hair color, and skin color to show us what segregation was like at a simple level. Being the only brown child in the class, I was forced to play with toys by myself, separated from all of my friends who happened to be white. At the end of the activity, our teacher asked us what we had noticed about this activity, and all anyone could mention was how “Chloe was all alone because she’s different”. After that, a group of kids came up to me at recess and made fun of how “different and long my last name was, and had a competition on who could butcher my last name the most. That lasted for the rest of the school year. Though this wasn’t the worst thing that could have happened, and so many people have many other experiences that are much more serious, this gave me my first taste of what it's like to be made fun of because of where my parents are from. This type of treatment can be so damaging to an individual, and to have it be so commonly accepted is a matter that must be taken care of in everyday life.

As I talked about earlier, social inequality is a barrier that society has created to limit people who are different in almost every single way, whether that be race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Because of this, people aren’t given the same opportunities as others based on who they are because society has deemed them as “less than”. Truly to me, it is one of the most destructive things humankinds has implemented into communities and it deeply saddens me that people must endure this type of treatment. As people, we should learn how to break through these barriers and not treat people differently based on things they cannot control. The people who need to break through these barriers consist of the people who are continuously putting up these barriers and have none of the attributes that are being shamed. This is who people are, and we need to accept that because there is nothing less than about them. They are worthy and special just the way they are and deserve others' respect and acceptance. The fact

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that people still must endure these treatments is unacceptable. People within these communities are so strong and deserve way better than what society has done for them. Eight times have I been called exotic in my lifetime, and that is eight times too many.

As I have now gone through a whole year of Praxis, I would say that my stance has stayed relatively the same. I am still having feelings that, even though I have had more experiences within communities, there is still a part of me that feels the barriers that I talk about within this essay. I would say now, I have been able to make more connections with people who understand more of what I am feeling, and through Praxis, I have felt more comfortable talking about these ideas and statements I have made. Through my project, I have been able to see how societies interact with each other with students who are very young and how their backgrounds impact their educations in many different ways. Through having done my praxis project within an elementary school, I have been able to go back in time to where my original story came from and see how students now interact with each other and what they are feeling. It has been a great learning experience being in the classroom, and I have grown so much in my beliefs and understanding of what Social Inequality means to me and others.

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Identity and Positionality

I was so excited to finally go to India. Since both of my parents are immigrants, all I had wanted to do as a kid was experience where they had grown up and their lives before America. Because my mom had more family in the Netherlands, my family and I had already been there several times, so this was the first time seeing where my dad grew up. My mind raced with thoughts as we boardeplanee plan. *Finally, there are going to be people like me there.* As much as I loved visiting my mom's side of the family, there was always something a little different about them and me. I always stuck out like a sore thumb as the only brown person. So going to India was going to be a refreshing change, where I could finally blend in. That lasted all of five minutes once we landed in Delhi.

As we left the airport, I looked around, making sure I took in everything. The smog that consumed the sky, the bustling cars and motorcycles, and the mass amount of people that swarmed the streets of downtown Delhi. Everything was exactly how I imagined it. Absolutely perfect. "Keep up, girls," my dad exclaimed as he attempted to hail a cab. As we stood there waiting, I started to feel an odd sensation. I was being watched. People's eyes were glued to me as they walked by, and I couldn't understand why. *Is it what I'm wearing? I knew my clothing was a little different, but I didn't think it would attract so much attention.* As I started to notice it more and more, my heart started to race as I ran through every scenario of why I was being watched. My dad finally was able to get a cab and as we were getting our bags in the trunk I

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whispered “Hey dad, why are people watching us? And he took my hand and said “Honey, they have never seen people as white as you, your sisters and mom.” I laughed when we said that because that surely couldn’t be true. “Are you serious?” I questioned as he responded with “There are a lot of people in India who have never seen a white person before, let alone a mixed family. But don’t mind them, they are just shocked”. His response broke my heart. The one place where I truly felt I was going to feel accepted and a part of a community, turns out I am a spectacle. In that moment, I knew there was no place on earth where I would be brown or white enough for a certain group of people.

One experience that I had at Clark was my freshman year, and me with a group of friends in a dorm room. The topic got onto race, and I was loaded with a bunch of questions that all started with “Is it racist if I say…”. Being in a situation like that, where offensive things are being said to you, and you feel trapped, can be suffocating. I knew that I was the “token brown person” In the friend group, and there was nothing for me to do about it. It can be hurtful to know that there are going to be situations where, because of the color of your skin, you will be placed into a box based on attributes of yourself you have no control over. To me, positionality has a lot to do with my race, and because of the situations that I have been in, I have been able to feel too brown for white people and too white for brown people, which, in truth, is a very frustrating cycle and sadly is not something I think can be fixed.

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Throughout this essay, I touch a lot on how going to India was supposed to be a very different experience than what it actually turned out to be. Through that experience, I had to learn how to make my own space in this world that made me feel comfortable, and through this year in Praxis, I have been able to feel more comfortable voicing how I feel and my experiences. When I was writing this essay, it was the first time I was asked to put my experiences down on paper, and it made my experiences real and seen by others. By going into the schools for my praxis project, I was able to see how other students were interacting with each other and how race played a role in what they were learning and how they felt about it. The third graders were not really talking about it much, but some of the things they would say to one another in a more insulting way were very clearly about race, and seeing that within students who were so young was eye-opening. It reminded me a lot of my time in elementary school and brought attention to what people think is acceptable to say ot others. This experience has, in some ways, made me feel stronger and more equipped in what I feel and think, but also confirmed all of the fears I have felt as a woman of color.

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Theory of Social Change

An interest of mine that I am very passionate about is women's rights. The lack of equality between men and women is astounding, and the fact that it is still such a problem in today's society shows how little we have come to assist women in having equal pay, opportunities, and overall access. As a woman, I have experienced and know a lot of women who have experienced crude comments and harassment throughout their everyday lives. Whistling while walking down the street, comments made about what "a woman's place in this world is," and so many other interactions that make me sick to talk about.

There have been so many instances in which I wanted to challenge stereotypes and assumptions of women because what others say, even without realizing it, can be very damaging to who someone is. But when I call people out for saying something, they get defensive, or angry, or my personal favorite, they respond with "remember when you could take a joke?" The back and forth of acceptance and standing up for oneself can tear you apart mentally. You have to find a way to make everyone else feel better while compromising your own feelings. The fact that this is a reality for people is cruel treatment that no one should have to face.

My positionality aligns with this because I am a woman and, more specifically, a woman of color. Because of this, I have been exposed to a lot of negativity and comments that have shaped who I am and what I stand for. As a woman of color, I fight for what is right, and the fact that there are still people in the world who discriminate against women and also people of color is astonishing. There have definitely been improvements over time and I am not trying to discard

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the people who made that possible, but it is still so prevalent in women's everyday lives. It is painful to have others use actions and words to tear you down, knowing that it is because of something you can't control.

I have many passions, but one of them is teaching when I am done with college. I hope to be able to teach kids how to do math and science, but mainly, I strive to teach them how to be good people. Whether that be through kind actions or assisting them in healthy confrontation when someone makes them feel bad about themselves, that is what being a good teacher means to me. If I can make them better people while also teaching them academics. I will feel as though I have accomplished my goals.

Throughout this essay, I walk through some experiences that has relate towards being a woman and how the injustices that have happened have caused me to stand up in a more present way as an advocate for women's rights and make sure all women feel as though they can share their opinions in a way where they feel heard and respected. Throughout this year in Praxis, I have been able to be in a space where I feel my opinions and ideas are heard, and I could not be more thankful for the environment we created as a cohort. But there are still a lot of times when I have, in my personal life, still had experiences where someone has made a comment or joke that I have taken in a negative way. But I have been a lot better about standing up for myself, which is something I could not say for the person I was before this experience. Especially within schools, students are a lot more respectful towards male teachers and have an easier time disobeying female teachers because they are "nicer". Through my time in Praxis, I have been able to learn how to be more confident in what I am saying and that my voice matters, especially because I am

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a woman. Praxis has shown me that every voice matters, and I am someone who has important things to say in and outside of a classroom.

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