

## REFLECTION OF SOCIAL MOBILITY AND RISK-TAKING BEHAVIOR STUDY

This empirical study was concluded at California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) during the Fall 2016 semester. Collaboratively, a small group of undergraduate students created an experimental research study to examine the causal influence that perceptions about socioeconomic mobility have on risk-taking behavior, thereby advancing our understanding of anticipated economic opportunity among college students and filling this gap in the psychological literature.

This project originated with an extensive literature review carried out using CSUSM library resources. They allowed us to access a variety of databases (e.g., PsycINFO, Academic Search Premier) and a number of empirical articles relevant to our research question. Essentially, we wanted to discover if a pessimistic perspective on one's financial future would lead to engaging in risky behaviors detrimental to financial and academic growth. Conversely, we wanted to discover if an optimistic perspective would lead to more positive behaviors. The scholarly sources provided by the library were the most recent and ground-breaking studies on perceptions about socioeconomic mobility. This access to real-time, relevant data, allowed us to develop an innovative study that would contribute to the extant literature on the subject. Thankfully, access to the library resources is available both on and off campus, making our work quick and efficient. With the knowledge obtained through our extensive literature review, we found a gap in the literature, discovering no study to date had experimentally manipulated mindset regarding socioeconomic mobility and examined how this mindset would influence risk-taking behavior (ex: engaging in unprotected sex) in a sample of college students (who are often prone to risky situations).

Through the amazing resources of the CSUSM library, we were able to discover and contact the first researcher at Yale University to develop relevant experimental manipulations. Using his guidance and framework, we were able to include these research materials in our experimental model. We now had an extensive list of peer-reviewed scholarly articles accessed through the CSUSM library. Additionally, the CSUSM library provided information and training to use *Zotero*. This software saved our journal articles in PDF format, housed our references in one location, and allowed us to download and insert our citations directly from databases onto our manuscript. Our background work and extensive literature review was facilitated extensively by the CSUSM library, allowing us to create an innovative experiment and becoming the first known lab to draw causal inferences about the relationship between mindset regarding socioeconomic mobility and risk-taking behavior in a variety of behavioral domains (social, financial, health/safety, and recreational risk taking behavior).

We planned out our experiment with careful detail using Qualtrics to create our final survey materials (Qualtrics, another software that the CSUSM library has resources on, is accessible through the CSUSM library website). After we used our references and literature review to support and write our Institutional Review Board (IRB) application, we were approved and recruited 204 participants through CSUSM's Human Participant Pool (HPP). In this experiment, participants were randomly assigned to two different conditions. In one condition, the manipulation described socioeconomic mobility as genetically based and static and the other manipulation described socioeconomic mobility as impermanent and culturally variable. Data collection began March 2016 and collecting, coding, analyzing, and writing up our results in a manuscript was finished Fall 2016.

This empirical research was important for a number of reasons. First, it allowed us to conceptually replicate previous research manipulating participants' mindset regarding socioeconomic mobility. Second, it was the first to examine how differently these two distinct mindsets influence risk-taking behavior, in a context where it can be particularly detrimental to one's future. Third, the causal inferences drawn from this study allow us to examine how this work can apply to future interventions aimed at increasing positive behaviors (e.g., investing) and decreasing risk-taking behaviors (e.g., engaging in unprotected sex). If these interventions were effective, inducing an optimistic mindset about financial future in a younger population could lead to investment of their money and accumulate assets. Asset researchers provide evidence these positive behaviors can improve academic and health-outcomes.

Collectively, the success of our research endeavor was only possible through resources provided by the CSUSM library and our faculty mentors' guidance along the way. This scientific process allowed us undergraduates to independently seek out resources, develop as researchers, and grow as students. These resources that CSUSM provides have been extremely important to our success as students and have made our work efficient. They are available to us throughout the day and night, and never fail to provide everything we need.