Guilt is characterized by the belief taking is the ability to identify with, or understand their family and friends experienced higher levels of distorted perspectives. The result was often the development of inhibitions, inadvertently make those less fortunate suffer simply by social comparison. The result was often the development of inhibitions, preventing individuals with high empathy-based guilt from achieving their developmental goals to avoid harming others. Using archival empirical data, this quantitative study aimed to examine the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES), empathy, and kinder perspective on the non-conscious mind. The Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) is a widely-used 20-item self-report instrument, with (CAS; Berry & O'Connor, 2000). The CAS is a 45-item instrument, derived from a measure of social support (Vaux, Riedel, & Stewart, 1987). Instead of measuring how much social support a person receives, the CAS measures how much support someone tends to extend to others. Respondents indicate how frequently they perform acts of altruism for family, friends, and strangers in a variety of social situations. Items from this questionnaire include how often the participant “gave money for an indefinite amount of time” and “helped them think about a problem.”

Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1980). The IRI is a 28-item self-report instrument measuring diverse categories of empathy. Perspective taking is the ability to identify with, or understand the cognitive situation experienced by another person. Empathic Concern is the degree of concern a person feels toward another person’s distress. Personal Distress is the degree of distress a person is likely to feel, upon witnessing difficulties experienced by another person.

For depression, there was a negative linear effect across social classes (p<.01), which indicates higher levels of depression associated with lower SES groups but not the upper-middle class group.

For empathic concern, there was a quadratic effect across social class groups (p<.05), indicating a non-linear association between SES groups and empathic concern. Simple contrasts revealed that the working class group failed to differ from the lower-middle class group, but was higher in depression than the upper-middle class group.

This study supported prior research associating socioeconomic class and prosocial emotions, empathy, and altruistic behavior, with lower class populations generally demonstrating greater empathy, altruistic behavior and prosocial emotions such as survivor guilt and an unrealistic, omnipotent sense of responsibility for others. While one might expect that those who have more would feel survivor guilt towards those with less, data points in the opposite direction. Many suggest that people from lower socioeconomic classes are more interdependent; they need to lean upon one another, and this has led to the evolution of the higher proneness to empathy, supporting mutually supportive and cooperative behavior. This study mirrored others in that the lower the class, the higher the levels of survivor guilt proneness, emotional empathy, or concern for others.

Analysis of covariance was used to examine the effects of respondents' SES backgrounds on empathy-based interpersonal guilt, empathic concern, and depression, while controlling age, gender, and ethnicity as covariates. For each psychological outcome variable, we tested (1) polynomial contrasts across social class groups and (2) simple contrasts of the working class group to the other three social class groups (lower-middle, middle, and upper-middle).

**RESULTS CONTINUED**

**DISCUSSION**

This study supported prior research associating socioeconomic class and prosocial emotions, empathy, and altruistic behavior, with lower class populations generally demonstrating greater empathy, altruistic behavior and prosocial emotions such as survivor guilt and an unrealistic, omnipotent sense of responsibility for others. While one might expect that those who have more would feel survivor guilt towards those with less, data points in the opposite direction. Many suggest that people from lower socioeconomic classes are more interdependent; they need to lean upon one another, and this has led to the evolution of the higher proneness to empathy, supporting mutually supportive and cooperative behavior. This study mirrored others in that the lower the class, the higher the levels of survivor guilt proneness, emotional empathy, or concern for others.

The importance of empathy, prosocial motivation and altruistic behavior is increasing in today's world. While climate change is calling for massive cooperative efforts within and between nations, the concentration of wealth at the top is escalating, and with it, political inequity. It was reported in the Nation that today, 20 people own as much wealth as half of all Americans. We can only wonder if the questionable current decisions being made in Washington by one of the wealthiest presidential cabinets in American history, is a compelling example of lower levels of empathy found in the wealthy, and poor.