

Sociology 125 (Social Stratification)
Spring 99

At the beginning of the semester, when we were asked to write about our class level, I immediately began writing about the upper, middle class. I remember calling my parents on the phone that night and asking them the same question and they asked me, “what is the definition of class?” My initial feeling about class was that if you had enough money to buy the things you wanted in life, you were at least in the middle class. I was looking at class in a materialistic way. This class has really broadened my understanding about the different elements to the question, “what class do you belong to, and why are you there?” I understand that class is not something you have control over, or what you chose it is something that you are born into. With the help of the many books and articles that we read over the course of the semester, I feel that their different perspectives of class, expand my own feelings of class and inequality.

When I began reading *Declining Fortunes*, by Katherine S. Newman, the chapter on the spoiled generation, I immediately thought of my family when I was growing up. Some of the stories that were written in this chapter really applied to my life, others did not. Martin O’Rourke wrote about how he feels that his generation is very selfish because they want it all. He writes that these people want everything that mommy and daddy had, plus they want more! (Newman 142) I relate to this statement because I want all that my mommy and daddy had, and more! However, I don’t find this to a bad thing. I grew up in a nice suburban neighborhood, in a large two-story home. Our kitchen was always filled with an abundance of food and the rooms were filled with the most comfortable furniture. In other words, I lived a comfortable life, and I never thought about having financial problems. In the summer, I knew along with my parents sending me to camp, we would take a family vacation together. This was the lifestyle that I was used to, and this is the lifestyle that I expect when I grow up. I thought of Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital, because it is defined as the general cultural background, knowledge disposition, and skills that are passed on through the generations. (MacLeod 13) It was not only through my neighborhood, but also through the kids that I played with and the schools that I attended that I internalized these types of expectations.

My Dad grew up in a neighborhood, like the one I did when I was a kid. He had the same type of childhood and the same type of lifestyle. His parents were both college graduates and demanded that he follow the same route. My dad received his Bachelors in business from ____ University. My dad has always held very upstanding positions in his company. The reason I mention this is because, this is what I have always grown up knowing. You finish high school and you apply to college to receive a higher education. That is the cultural capital that my parents presented to me. Why would I expect anything less, if my parents had it, why can’t I? My parents have instilled in me that I can do anything that I put my mind to, although there are some limitations to that statement, for the most part it is true. I am graduating from college with a bachelor’s degree of my own, so that I can get a job that will entitle me to the type of lifestyle that I am accustomed to. I feel that because I have been fortunate to receive my education when I was growing up in school with many resources to give us everything we needed, I...

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