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Sociology 105- 006

02 May 2022

Final Reflection Essay

Is there mobility in class and does it affect how achievable the American Dream is? The American Dream is built on the basis of equal opportunity in America. However, the level of opportunity revolves around class and other institutional forces that fall upon an individual. America has a class system with an abundance of steps, but Americans do not like to acknowledge it. The concept of middle class is one that is broad and consists of a variety of lifestyles and incomes. Because the middle class takes up a majority of the class system, on the occasion that there is mobility, there is still little movement. From a generational standpoint, children are also more likely to end up in the same class as their parents. The United States is not a classless society, therefore class distinctions are extremely relevant. The American Dream will fail to exist in a system where basic needs and opportunity are rooted in economic standing.

Climbing or descending the ladder of class can occur through a multitude of reasons with marriage only being one of them. Being raised by immigrant parents on food stamps, it was not until my mother married my white stepfather that I understood and was made aware of the privileges of living in a higher ranking class. It is promoted that in America all citizens have an equal chance to succeed with a bit of drive and hard work. Yet, there is little discussion on the advantages those born into a specific class may have. In their case, less sacrifices and hard work

mine and my family's quality of life. Our class determined the level of education I was receiving, the amount of time we would spend as a family, and our overall physical health. Had it not been for my mother's new marriage, it would have been nearly impossible to move upward in class. The American Dream then becomes unattainable when the stressors of being lower class put me behind my peers. Without proper education, I am unable to find a well paying job. Without a well paying job, I am unable to make an income to support myself and the situation continues to spiral. Fortunately, moving into a new household with a parent who is considered upper middle class gave me a headstart I lacked in my previous one; however, other institutional forces like race and gender still prevented me from receiving an equal opportunity to thrive.

While the majority of class depends on parental standing and what an individual is born into, other factors can and will greatly contribute to class mobility. Although my mother and I are technically apart of higher class individuals, we still suffer from discrimination due to being women of color. Not only have I personally experienced the oppressing nature of class, but I have seen the effects of it on other races and genders. Unfortunately, connections and the respect received from peers play into moving up in class. Again, there is the pattern of a lack of mobility. If a person of color, especially a woman of color made an effort to climb the socioeconomic ladder, in turn the class ladder, she can potentially be discriminated against by the color of her skin and her gender. This prejudice has the capacity to occur regardless of equal education or job title. At the end of the day, white rich men are at an advantage and easily climb the systems established in the United States. While class, gender, and race work independently of one another, they are still connected and our success lies in these factors.

clear and overwhelmingly challenging. It is also important to note that the American Dream in modern day is aimed towards poor, underprivileged individuals with false hope at a glamorous and equal life. From personal experience, the dream is promoted towards immigrants and often these individuals are not white. Yet, it is questionable how underprivileged individuals, most often in lower class, can hope for equal opportunities at success when the odds are against them.

Diving further into class in America, author Gregory Mantsios discusses common myths that are believed and the true reality of each. A major point he makes is that the United States is not a classless society and that not everyone has an equal chance to succeed. Class differences exist and the gap between wealthy and poor only continues to increase. With these class differences follows the likelihood of survival, as well as the chances to excel academically. Mantsios gives examples of three individuals, all considered middle class, that live drastically different lifestyles. The individual that was well off was born into it, while another individual suffers discrimination as a black woman and makes barely enough to survive. This proves the reality that Americans do not have equal opportunity, and those born into wealth stay in wealth. The unequal distribution of resources in society then contradicts the American Dream.

Understanding class differences and the correlation to success and possessing a specific lifestyle is gained once comprehending Mantsios's realities of class. A sense of closure is gained after becoming aware of the flaws that engulf the class system in America. Rather than fighting the system in an effortless attempt, it is better to understand why it operates in the way it does in order to overcome it. Class designation is not based around an individual's capabilities and sense of perseverance. Class relies heavily on the family one is born into, their race, gender, and other

experience, but am also comprehending that the sacrifices made in the past are a result of class structure and not a comment on character. The American Dream is made difficult because of the disadvantages I faced and may continue to face in the system that runs America. The difficulty stems from how lower class individuals are forced to focus on survival, rather than taking advantage of what little opportunities are offered. Although not a terrible mindset, the American Dream was unfortunately never fair and ceases to exist and thrive when equal opportunities do not exist.

In America, there is little mobility in the class and socioeconomic system. There are multiple factors that may hinder an individual's success and attempt to move up the structural ladder. America is not a classless society and this contradicts the idea of the American Dream. Not only does my personal experience reflect the realities discussed by Mantios, but the problems that arise as a result of class are evident in daily life. The wealth gap is significant and is seen in the ways some individuals fight to survive while others drown in the abundance of luxuries their lifestyle has to offer. Class offers an issue to Americans, but not recognizing that class exists offers a larger one. Success is rooted in class, gender, and race, and although this is recognized as unfair, nothing is often done. The society Americans live in tolerates such injustices, and the best way to combat this issue is to discuss common myths, analyze the realities, work on narrowing the gap, and eventually redistribute the possession of wealth and power.