

Unit One

Introduction to Social Class

Anchor Texts for Unit One:

Fussell, Paul. "A Touchy Subject" and "An Anatomy of the Classes." *Class: A Guide through the American Status System*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992. 15-50. Print.

Weber, Max. "Class, Status and Party." *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*. Boulder, CO: Westview, 2011. 56-67. Print.

Marx, Karl. "Preamble" and "Chapter One: Bourgeois and Proletarians" *Marx/Engels Selected Works*. Vol. 1. Moscow: Progress, 1969. 98-137. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. 2000. Web. 16 Sept. 2014.

Suggested Literary Texts and Films for this Unit:

William Blake, excerpts from *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*

Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Wife of Bath's Tale" or "The Miller's Tale"

Kate Chopin, "A Pair of Silk Stockings"

Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders*

Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads* (including preface)

Charles Dickens, "A Walk in the Workhouse"

Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery"

Henry James, "Daisy Miller"

Denis Johnson, "Work"

Ben Jonson, "To Penshurst"

Mary Paul, "The Lowell Factory Girl"

Jacob Riis, excerpts from *How the Other Half Lives*

Gangs of New York, (2002, director: Martin Scorsese)

Excerpts from *The Tatler* and/or *The Spectator*

John Updike, "A&P"

Walt Whitman, "A Song for Occupations"

Major Writing Assignment:

Close Reading: This writing assignment must be at least 1500+ words in length and must involve a close reading of a particular literary text through the lens of a concept introduced in class.

Sample Daily Response Prompts:

Fussell

Assignment: Please read through class policy statement for Wednesday and read (on Blackboard, under “texts/policies etc.”) and read Paul Fussell "A Touchy Subject" and "An Anatomy of the Classes" and read pgs 1-16 in chapter one, “The Analytical Frame of Mind,” from Rosenwasser and Stephen’s *Writing Analytically*. **Respond to the following** and paste (don’t upload file) your response on Blackboard at “Journal/Standard Reading Responses:” In the excerpts from *Writing Analytically*, Rosenwasser and Stephen describe four “counterproductive habits of mind.” We are all guilty of these at times. For this exercise, I would like you to decide which of these you are most often guilty of and I want you to respond to the Fussell reading by implementing the “cures” or suggested techniques offered in the text. Please write a 200 word response to Fussell drawing on these suggestions, and then write a brief description of what was difficult about doing so. **Please bring laptops to class Wednesday.**

Marx

Assignment: Read Marx excerpts from *The Communist Manifesto* (“Preamble” and “Chapter One”) and William Blake, selections from *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience*. Also read pgs 16-37 in chapter one, “The Analytical Frame of Mind” from Rosenwasser and Stephen’s *Writing Analytically*. **Please choose a response for these readings. Bring laptops to class.**
Augmentation: Watch the BBC documentary [*Children of the Revolution*](#).

Weber

Assignment: Read Max Weber’s "Class, Status and Party" and Charles Dickens’ “A Walk in the Workhouse” and respond to the following (students with last names that begin with A-M do the headers up to and including “Status Honor” on pg. 61; students with last names beginning with N-Z do the headers from “Guarantees of Status Stratification” on pg. 61 to the end): Looking beyond the judgment that the Weber reading is “difficult,” (move 1), look to the headers and see how they organize and break up the main ideas and in a single sentence summarize the content of each header. From there find a “revealing” sentence under each section and type it up (move 2). Pick the one you find most interesting and ask what it implies (“so what/why does this matter?” (move 3). Write a brief commentary comparing your “so what?” response to a passage in Dickens. Given the difficulty of the Weber piece, students are encouraged to read scholarly summaries of the text along side the text itself. **Bring laptops to class.**

Sample In-Class Lesson Plan Ideas

Fussell

In-class: With a partner, a) find a definition in Fussell for one of the following (assigned) terms and then b) type up three interesting examples where the term is used in the text and then c) (without jumping to judgment) write a brief commentary on why one is particularly interesting. Post your responses to the class [Google Doc](#). Available terms/phrases: 1) upper class, 2) middle class, 3) lower/working class, 4) Knowing Where You Stand in America, 5) social status/stratification, 6) Race, 7) inequality.

Marx (with Blake poems)

Lecture/Collaboration: As a group (and using [the class Google Doc](#)) find/develop definitions for: communism, proletariat, bourgeoisie.

In-class: Break into groups of three and then do the following, posting final work to [the class Google Doc](#):

- 1) List the main points of Marx's argument and type up a quotation (with pg. #) that summarizes that point, then decide as a group which part of the text was the strangest/most interesting/most revealing to you and discuss some ideas why.
- 2) Group-compose a summary of the whole text and then choose a term defined by the class and find instances in one of the Blake poems where we can see the term as defined represented. Why?
- 3) As a group, decide on the five strongest connections between Marx and Blake and write a brief comment on why the connections matters ("so what?")

Weber (with Dickens' "A Walk in the Workhouse")

Lecture: Introducing Move 4, "The Method"

In-class: In pairs, use "The Method" on an assigned section of the Weber text and type your results, then write a brief summary in less than 50 words of the section. Also type a brief passage from the Dickens piece (with page number). Post your work on [the class Google Doc](#).

Sample Major Writing Assignments

ETS 181: Class and Literary Texts

Assignment One: Interpretative Footnote Paper

(1500+ words)

For Project One students will write a series of analytical footnotes to a poem or story from class that they will then use to develop series of possible thesis statements that could be developed in a longer argument. The footnotes will be developed and written using aspects of Rosenwasser and Stephen's "Five Analytical Moves." This project has three discrete parts, which will all be clearly labeled and turned in:

- 1.1. **Introduction to the Project:** a concise (less than one page, single-spaced) introduction that sets up the project on the whole and establishes what core ideas were gleaned through the footnoting/analysis part of the project.
- 1.2. **Footnotes:** For this part of the project, students will, using the Word "footnote" feature, append ten footnotes to particular passages of the poem or story they selected. Students may select either the Blake poems, the Chopin story, or Carver's story "Neighbors." Five of these will be focused on close-reading and explicit interpretation of the text. The other five will be used to provide important context that helps the reader interpret the text. The commentary in the footnotes will explicitly address the text immediately prior to the footnote. The footnotes themselves should be developed by using Rosenwasser and Stephen's "Five Analytical Moves" and students should also be very consciously working at curbing their own counterproductive habits of mind and suspending their judgment while they write (see Rosenwasser and Stephens in the course pack for details on this). (Word versions of these are posted on Blackboard under "texts/readings/supplemental texts/unit one texts.")

Close-Reading Commentary

Each close-reading footnote should be less than 300 words long (thus, these footnotes are not casual brainstorming, but concise, evidence-based ideas garnered from using the "Five Analytical Moves.") This kind of footnote must have the following characteristics:

- Each must include a one-sentence introductory statement clarifying the idea that is developed later in the footnote. (This is a "topic sentence" for the footnote.)
- Each must contain a clear and concise commentary on how the student's idea relates to the passage and how the prose of the text itself provides evidence that these ideas are valid. This should be worked out through the analysis techniques discussed in Rosenwasser and Stephen and clearly summed up here.
- Each must conclude with a clear statement of what has just been said in the footnote, particularly how what has been said proves a particular part of the larger thesis/idea.

Contextual Commentary

Here the student will provide important contextual information from valid sources. This context could be historical information, comments on the prosody or form of the piece, allusions, points of reference, etc. The student will need to provide an MLA-style citation for each (reliable, high-quality) source text for this contextual information and should add an

additional commentary to clearly connect the information provided with the text being elucidated.

- 1.3. **Thesis Statements:** In this section students will write up five possible thesis statements that could be proven, given the interpretative work they did with their footnotes. Each thesis statement should include a brief blurb discussing how this would be proven and why it would be an interesting idea to explore.

Writing process suggestion for Paper One: The ideas for this project can be developed by suspending your judgment (“Move One” in Rosenwasser and Stephen, pgs. 16 and 17) and then asking (in a spirit of open association) “What do I notice in the text? What is worth focusing on? What is interesting, revealing or strange?” (“Move Two,” pgs. 17-21). With these observations, ask “So what, why does this matter?” This allows you to take what’s evidently implied in the passage and make it explicit in your own words. (“Move Three,” pgs. 21-26). By taking the strongest of these observations and implications, look for patterns of repetition and contrast as well as anomalies (“Move Four,” pgs. 26-32). Then repeat and reformulate the above questions and techniques as needed until a strong, evidence-based argument begins to surface (“Move Five,” pgs. 32-33). Take notes and read with a pencil as you work through the text. Each footnote you eventually write will be focused on evaluating and analyzing how a particular passage of the text participates in the larger idea and how the prose itself provides evidence to support the claims you make about this idea.

Word has a built-in footnoting feature that is easy to use, and thus students are expected to use this feature to create the footnoted document for 1.2.

Assignment Two: Emergent Bibliography on Gender and Inequality

(2000+ words)

For this project, students will select a “literary text” that will be the interpretive focus of the project. This “literary text” can be any poem, story or narrative film used in class or approved by the professor. Once the text is selected, the student will create a three-part, clearly-labeled project:

2.1. Contextualization of Literary Text: In this section, students will introduce and contextualize the focal literary text in less than 300 words, providing basic information on when/where it was written, the author, its import and reception, etc. (Students will cite their sources in MLA style).

2.2. Annotated Bibliography: In this part of the assignment, each of three theoretical articles will be given an MLA-style citation and then individually summarized and evaluated. Of the three articles, one *must be* one of the anchor texts from Unit One (thus either Marx, Weber or Fussell). A second must be from the following list (all found on Bb under “texts/readings/supplemental texts:

“Feminism and Class Power” by bell hooks

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “The Solitude of Self”

Eugene Debs, “Socialists Who Would Emascuate Socialism”

Eve K. Sedgwick, excerpt, “Homosocial desire” from the introduction to *Between Men*

The third article must be gotten through independent library research and must explicitly discuss either 1) a key concept common to the other two theoretical texts (thus, if you are writing about hook’s idea of “bourgeois feminism” then an obvious connection is to Marx, and the third article could discuss some aspect of the bourgeoisie), or 2) it must explicitly discuss one of the articles itself.

The objective is to understand the argument of each text on its own terms (summary), find its strengths and weaknesses (evaluation). Please use the following sample to format 2.1:

Burke, Kenneth. *A Grammar of Motives*. Berkeley: U. of California, 1969. Print.

Summary. In this section, the whole argument of the article or chapter is written briefly in the student’s own words. There is no opinion in this section, just a concise account of what the author says. This must be done clearly in less than 200 words and in a single paragraph. (Look at Rosenwasser and Stephen’s technique for summary writing on pgs. 75-77).

Evaluation. Here, students will analyze and place evidence-based value judgments on the strengths and weaknesses of the various threads of the argument presented in the article. In these evaluations, the student may have an opinion, but it is always grounded in evidence from the text. (Writing evaluations is most closely tied to the “five analytical moves.”)

2.3 Interpretative Dialogue

In this part, the student will imagine a dialogue between the three theorists from section 2.2. In this discussion, the theorists will closely read the chosen poem, story or narrative film together, debating various interpretations. They should base everything they say on evidence from the poem, story or film, (thus they are reading the text closely instead of speaking in generalities) and the arguments they make should be based on the ideas found in the articles they wrote. This should be written as a dialogue, as in a play, and it should end with one character taking a clear position, based on what’s been said. This section should be 1000+ words.

The goal here is to see where the ideas in the theoretical texts connect with the literary text and how the theorists interpret the literary text differently because of their different perspectives. The hope is that the student will bring new ideas to the fore that they would not have seen otherwise. It is important to remember that the dialogue section is expected to be rigorous and evidence-based, as well, though students can feel free to have the theorists ask questions that remain unanswered. (Students may turn to some of the techniques and ideas discussed by Rosenwasser and Stephen's chapter on "Interpretation" (pgs. 119-145).

Writing process suggestions for Assignment Two: It is important to note how relevant the fifth analytical move is to this assignment. The bibliography "emerges" because you are constantly looping back, reconsidering earlier ideas, reading and bringing in new ideas and texts, and comparing the materials in new ways, looking for the most relevant, strongest and most compelling arguments you can make. There is both a theoretical and literary aspect to the synthesis you are performing here, so it is important to think about how the dialogue will affect revisions of the annotated bibliography, especially the evaluation section. What we want here is an interesting interpretation of the literary text, and the theory should help foster that. If it's not helping you, you should reconsider the theory you are using. Well-chosen theory should act like dust on a fingerprint.

A key to integrating the theory in the dialogue is making sure that your understanding of the theories discussed is clear and text-focused. Do not over-generalize the ideas in the theory (one of the counterproductive habits of mind to watch for). And make sure the dialogue is concrete, focused on particular passages or parts of the text/film. This document can be a bit messy, but the assignment, because it is looking closely at these theoretical intersections, will already tend (by its nature) toward more and more complexity. Allow yourself to explore a range of ideas, but rein in ideas when they get too obtuse or too complex to discuss clearly in the time and space allotted. It is smarter to say something small and profound clearly than to say something complex confusingly. Remember, you are looking closely at just a few ideas in a few texts. In the words of Maude, "The earth is my body, my head is in the stars." Stay grounded in the text and in the lived experience that tells you when something is getting too abstract. If it doesn't clearly mean something to you, it will almost assuredly mean little to your reader, and more than likely you'll just confuse and confound them. It's not an academic exercise so much as it is you allowing the ideas and literature speak through you. If it doesn't make good sense to you, it won't make sense to the reader.

The assignment is designed to act as a springboard for Project Three, so the pressure is off; just make sure you are getting to a deep level of textual analysis and that your ideas are always grounded in textual evidence as you brainstorm and shape your ideas around this collection of texts.

Project Three: Research Paper

(~2000-3000 words)

Taking whatever concepts and texts from Project Three that are worth further attention, students will write a paper that conveys a revised and extended version of those ideas, except here students may focus on either gender and class or *race* and class (as with the readings from Unit Three). The end product will be a 8-10 page paper. The student must focus their attention on interpreting a particular literary text. Thus, there will be discussion of theory and ideas, but the emphasis will be on reading a literary text closely through a particular interpretative lens. All sources discussed/cited in the final paper must be listed at the end in a “Works Cited” page and all citations must be done in MLA style. There is no required number of sources; the number should develop organically as you write. Creativity, originality of thought, and invigorating style are expected, but students should take note that a significant part of the grade on this project will be on the clear reasoning behind the argument put forward.

Writing process suggestions for Assignment Three: Again, students will not be able to think and write clearly unless they care about the texts they are discussing. This care doesn’t mean “taking a lot of time” to write (although I’m not going to discourage that), but more that you should feel it in your body, like a welling up inside, that you have something you want to say. If you don’t feel it, you are likely just spinning the Rubik’s Cube of words around on the page, looking for a solution. Give yourself time to think. Discuss your ideas with friends and take notes when you say something worth repeating in writing. Think of it less as an academic exercise, and more of a clear statement of what you might say to a smart friend. Imagine explaining the idea to different audiences: your grandmother, a six-year-old child, the president of the United States, etc. In the end, if what you say fails to make enough sense that you can wisely see and use the idea in your daily life, you need to think about it and revise it until it does.

Project Four: Class in Film

With a partner, you will choose a film (from the list below) that depicts the future and you will m by develop a 5-10 minute multimedia presentation that explores the ways the film constructs ideologies and subjectivities of class (in relation to race and gender, where appropriate) in a particular scene (or series of shorter scenes) from the film. This could take the form of a recorded “TED” style talk, a [Siskel and Ebert](#) film review, a “Vlog,” or some other video genre approved by the professor. Students are encouraged to use a smart, conversational style for much of this presentation (rather than a written, scripted style), and both participants are expected to have equal say in the discussion. Students are expected to use video clips from the film as discussion points, but these clips may make up no more than a third of the presentation. The presentation should be polished; there should be no awkward cuts, illogical ordering of the discussion, sloppy edits or other hallmarks of under-realized work. Students will individually submit a reflection to Blackboard detailing how their work was divided with their partner and how the process of putting the presentation together developed.

Possible films:

1. *The Matrix* (1999)
2. *Children of Men* (2006)
3. *Logan’s Run* (1976)
4. *Gattaca* (1997)
5. *District 9* (2009)
6. *THX 1138* (1971)
7. *Time of the Wolf* (original title: *Le Temps du Loup*) (2003)
8. *Contagion* (2011)
9. *Rollerball* (1975)
10. *The Road* (2009)

This project will count as the final and will thus be turned in during an as yet determined time finals week.

Individual Reflection Paper

Along with this project, individual students will also post a two-part 3-4 page reflection on 1) how the major projects for this class trace your own personal journey through social class and literature, and 2) how their work on Project Four was divided with their partner and how the process of putting the presentation together developed, including difficulties, moments of discovery, technical frustrations and solutions, etc.

Sample Student Work (Footnote Project):

ETS 181 Footnote Project Part One: Footnotes Student A

A Pair of Silk Stockings

by Kate Chopin (1851-1904)

Bibliographic Notes: First published in the early 1890s, and collected in *Bayou Folk* in 1894.

Little Mrs Sommers one day found herself the unexpected possessor of fifteen dollars. It seemed to her a very large amount of money, and the way in which it stuffed and bulged her worn old *portemonnaie* gave her a feeling of importance such as she had not enjoyed for years.

The question of investment was one that occupied her greatly. For a day or two she walked about apparently in a dreamy state, but really absorbed in speculation and calculation. She did not wish to act hastily, to do anything she might afterward regret. But it was during the still hours of the night when she lay awake revolving plans in her mind that she seemed to see her way clearly toward a proper and judicious use of the money.¹

A dollar or two should be added to the price usually paid for Janie's shoes, which would insure their lasting an appreciable time longer than they usually did. She would buy so and so many yards of percale for new shirt waists for the boys and Janie and Mag. She had intended to make the old ones do by skilful patching. Mag should have another gown. She had seen some beautiful patterns, veritable bargains in the shop windows. And still there would be left enough for new stockings – two pairs apiece – and what darning that would save for a while! She would get caps for the boys and sailor-hats for the girls. The vision of her little brood looking fresh and dainty and new for once in their lives excited her and made her restless and wakeful with anticipation.

¹ While class positions can change, it is much easier to pass as another class than to actually change classes. Because Mrs. Sommers previously identified with the middle or upper-middle class, she is familiar with cultural signifiers of a higher class. It is interesting to revisit Mrs. Sommers' initial intentions for her money, and compare these to her actions. Given the context of the story, it is likely that Mrs. Sommers has not had enough money for investment in a very long time. Since she is used to "getting by," she struggles to keep to her plan. Fussell notes that "at the bottom, people tend to believe that class is defined by the amount of money you have. In the middle, people grant that money has something to do with it, but think education and the kind of work you do almost equally important"(16). This suggests that according to Fussell, Mrs. Sommers would now be somewhere between low and mid proletarian, because she instantly associates her new money with class and power by going out and placing herself in a higher class position than she is comfortable in.

The neighbors sometimes talked of certain 'better days' that little Mrs Sommers had known before she had ever thought of being Mrs Sommers. She herself indulged in no such morbid retrospection. She had no time – no second of time to devote to the past. The needs of the present absorbed her every faculty. A vision of the future like some dim, gaunt monster sometimes appalled her, but luckily to-morrow never comes.

Mrs Sommers was one who knew the value of bargains; who could stand for hours making her way inch by inch toward the desired object that was selling below cost. She could elbow her way if need be; she had learned to clutch a piece of goods and hold it and stick to it with persistence and determination till her turn came to be served, no matter when it came.

But that day she was a little faint and tired. She had swallowed a light luncheon – no! when she came to think of it, between getting the children fed and the place righted, and preparing herself for the shopping bout, she had actually forgotten to eat any luncheon at all!

She sat herself upon a revolving stool before a counter that was comparatively deserted, trying to gather strength and courage to charge through an eager multitude that was besieging breastworks of shirting and figured lawn. An all-gone limp feeling had come over her and she rested her hand aimlessly upon the counter. She wore no gloves. By degrees she grew aware that her hand had encountered something very soothing, very pleasant to touch. She looked down to see that her hand lay upon a pile of silk stockings. A placard near by announced that they had been reduced in price from two dollars and fifty cents to one dollar and ninety-eight cents; and a young girl who stood behind the counter asked her if she wished to examine their line of silk hosiery. She smiled, just as if she had been asked to inspect a tiara of diamonds with the ultimate view of purchasing it. But she went on feeling the soft, sheeny luxurious things – with both hands now, holding them up to see them glisten, and to feel them glide serpent-like through her fingers.

Two hectic blotches came suddenly into her pale cheeks. She looked up at the girl.

“Do you think there are any eights-and-a-half among these?”

There were any number of eights-and-a-half. In fact, there were more of that size than any other. Here was a light-blue pair; there were some lavender, some all black and various shades of tan and gray. Mrs Sommers selected a black pair and looked at them very long and closely. She pretended to be examining their texture, which the clerk assured her was excellent.

“A dollar and ninety-eight cents,” she mused aloud. “Well, I'll take this pair.” She handed the girl a five-dollar bill and waited for her change and for her parcel. What a very small parcel it was! It seemed lost in the depths of her shabby old shopping-bag.

Mrs Sommers after that did not move in the direction of the bargain counter. She took the elevator, which carried her to an upper floor into the region of the ladies' waiting-rooms. Here, in a retired corner, she exchanged her cotton stockings for the new silk ones which she had just bought. She was not going through any acute mental process or reasoning with herself, nor was she striving to explain to her satisfaction the motive of her action. She was not thinking at all. She seemed for the time to be taking a rest from that laborious and fatiguing function and to have abandoned herself to some mechanical impulse that directed her actions and freed her of responsibility.

How good was the touch of the raw silk to her flesh! She felt like lying back in the cushioned chair and reveling for a while in the luxury of it. She did for a little while. Then she replaced her shoes,

rolled the cotton stockings together and thrust them into her bag. After doing this she crossed straight over to the shoe department and took her seat to be fitted.²

She was fastidious. The clerk could not make her out; he could not reconcile her shoes with her stockings, and she was not too easily pleased. She held back her skirts and turned her feet one way and her head another way as she glanced down at the polished, pointed-tipped boots. Her foot and ankle looked very pretty. She could not realize that they belonged to her and were a part of herself. She wanted an excellent and stylish fit, she told the young fellow who served her, and she did not mind the difference of a dollar or two more in the price so long as she got what she desired.

It was a long time since Mrs Sommers had been fitted with gloves. On rare occasions when she had bought a pair they were always ‘bargains’, so cheap that it would have been preposterous and unreasonable to have expected them to be fitted to the hand.³

Now she rested her elbow on the cushion of the glove counter, and a pretty, pleasant young creature, delicate and deft of touch, drew a long-wristed ‘kid’ over Mrs Sommers's hand. She smoothed it down over the wrist and buttoned it neatly, and both lost themselves for a second or two in admiring contemplation of the little symmetrical gloved hand. But there were other places where money might be spent.

There were books and magazines piled up in the window of a stall a few paces down the street. Mrs Sommers bought two high-priced magazines such as she had been accustomed to read in the days when she had been accustomed to other pleasant things. She carried them without wrapping. As well as she could she lifted her skirts at the crossings. Her stockings and boots and well fitting gloves had worked marvels in her bearing – had given her a feeling of assurance, a sense of belonging to the well-dressed multitude.

She was very hungry. Another time she would have stilled the cravings for food until reaching her own home, where she would have brewed herself a cup of tea and taken a snack of anything that was available. But the impulse that was guiding her would not suffer her to entertain any such thought.

² Money instills a level of comfort in people that allows them to have more time for themselves. It is implicit that Mrs. Sommers had not treated herself in awhile. It seems that she had become so accustomed to her ways of putting her family first that didn't know what it felt like to put herself first. She takes a second to relax, and in that fleeting moment, she frees herself of her mind. However, while it seems that Mrs. Sommers is losing sight of herself, by giving in to her wants and desires, she is likely being true to herself for the first time in awhile. She is not used to doing what she wants because her other obligations. She is also not necessarily being untrue to her family, by doing so. The issue actually seems to be that Mrs. Sommers has struggled to find balance in her life, and this has caused her to give in to many impulses at once. Instead of treating herself every so often in small amounts, she binges. Coming into new money allowed her to feel free, and therefore exempt from the conflicts of hedonistic spending, which she may have regrets about later.

³ Stereotypes largely influence class perception. Because Mrs. Sommers is familiar with the stereotypes associated with the upper-middle class, with her new money, she is able to pass as such. One does not have to conform to the stereotypes of social class, as Mrs. Sommers does not, however this comes with risk of being misperceived. Mrs. Sommers knows her monetary limits and her social limits, but her limits do not have to define her. One does not have to be defined by the things that separate him or her from others, nor does one need to be defined by the social norms he or she conforms to. We define ourselves, and society interprets us. The clerk is confused by Mrs. Sommers, which makes it clear that she is not entirely giving off one social class or another. Fussell cites the middle class as “the one that tends to ‘borrow status from higher elements’”(39). This is essentially what Mrs. Sommers is doing by wearing her new stockings and gloves. This can also be seen as an anomaly, if we are to associate Mrs. Sommers with the low-prole class, as this class is lower than the middle class. It is evident that Mrs. Sommers portrays characteristics of more than one social class.

There was a restaurant at the corner. She had never entered its doors; from the outside she had sometimes caught glimpses of spotless damask and shining crystal, and soft-stepping waiters serving people of fashion.

When she entered her appearance created no surprise, no consternation, as she had half feared it might.⁴ She seated herself at a small table alone, and an attentive waiter at once approached to take her order. She did not want a profusion; she craved a nice and tasty bite – a half dozen blue-points, a plump chop with cress, a something sweet – a crème-frappée, for instance; a glass of Rhine wine, and after all a small cup of black coffee.

While waiting to be served she removed her gloves very leisurely and laid them beside her. Then she picked up a magazine and glanced through it, cutting the pages with a blunt edge of her knife. It was all very agreeable. The damask was even more spotless than it had seemed through the window, and the crystal more sparkling. There were quiet ladies and gentlemen, who did not notice her, lurching at the small tables like her own. A soft, pleasing strain of music could be heard, and a gentle breeze, was blowing through the window. She tasted a bite, and she read a word or two, and she sipped the amber wine and wiggled her toes in the silk stockings. The price of it made no difference. She counted the money out to the waiter and left an extra coin on his tray, whereupon he bowed before her as before a princess of royal blood.

There was still money in her purse, and her next temptation presented itself in the shape of a *matinée* poster.

It was a little later when she entered the theatre, the play had begun and the house seemed to her to be packed. But there were vacant seats here and there, and into one of them she was ushered, between brilliantly dressed women who had gone there to kill time and eat candy and display their gaudy attire. There were many others who were there solely for the play and acting. It is safe to say there was no one present who bore quite the attitude which Mrs Sommers did to her surroundings. She gathered in the whole – stage and players and people in one wide impression, and absorbed it and enjoyed it. She laughed at the comedy and wept – she and the gaudy woman next to her wept over the tragedy. And they talked a little together over it. And the gaudy woman wiped her eyes and sniffled on a tiny square of filmy, perfumed lace and passed little Mrs Sommers her box of candy.

⁴ “Passing” comes with the possibility of being discovered, however despite this anxiety, as money permits, it is often easy to pass as another social class, as long perception remains superficial. Mrs. Sommers’ fear of her appearance causing others to be surprised and confused shows she is uncomfortable in the social position she places herself in. By wearing silk stockings and gloves to a fancy restaurant, she is doing something she is unfamiliar with—something she therefore feels like she shouldn’t be doing, as if dressing and acting in this way makes her feel guilty of misrepresenting herself, or afraid of being “caught” trying to “pass” as something she’s not. If she were comfortable acting or dressing like this, she would do so without thinking twice. When our actions are unnatural, we often wonder if others can tell we don’t fit in, which is exactly what Mrs. Sommers is experiencing. Paul Fussell suggests that a large part of class is how you portray yourself, by comparing a “blue-collar” family to a “white-collar” family—two families with completely different social classes, yet similar income. While money normally prevents Mrs. Sommers from portraying herself as higher class, as long as she has money to purchase cultural signifiers of higher class, she can “pass” as something she is not naturally. However, one’s class is not defined by what he or she can pass for, but rather what is natural and comfortable. Class is like using a fake ID: you can pass as something you’re not, but it’s scary the first few times, and you must surround yourself with unfamiliar people in order for it to work. For example, if anyone from Mrs. Sommers’ neighborhood saw her acting this way, she could not pass as higher class.

The play was over, the music ceased, the crowd filed out. It was like a dream ended. People scattered in all directions. Mrs Sommers went to the corner and waited for the cable car.⁵

A man with keen eyes, who sat opposite to her, seemed to like the study of her small, pale face. It puzzled him to decipher what he saw there. In truth, he saw nothing – unless he were wizard enough to detect a poignant wish, a powerful longing that the cable car would never stop anywhere, but go on and on with her forever.

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⁵ We often do things expecting responses from society, however our decisions are less often actually acknowledged or even noticed. No one commented on Mrs. Sommers' appearance. In this moment, Mrs. Sommers realizes she must fall back into reality as her day of escape ends. She escaped from her reality in that she stepped outside of her own social norms, however despite this, her actions during this "escape" are not exempt from her normal life. It is implied that Mrs. Sommers does not want to go back to her normal life just yet, knows she will have to go back to her daily struggles when she returns from her fantasy. There are connotations associated with all social classes, although according to Fussell most people want to be Upper-Middle class. Living the upper-middle class life was like a dream come true for Mrs. Sommers, however with limited funds her reputation could not be kept up. Mrs. Sommers experiences exemplify the influence of money on class –perception.

ETS 181 Footnote Project Part Two: Essay Student A

Money's Influence on Class and Class Perception

There is a difference between the people we are and the people we are perceived to be. Perception is based solely on what is tangible; therefore ignoring morals, values, thought processes and goals. So, in perceiving others, it is easy to merely see and interpret, without thinking—and it is this lacking thought process that allows us to pass as people we are not. As humans, we constantly attempt to label everything and everyone we encounter. The idea that everything needs to be labeled forces us to define things based on stereotypes and assumptions. This is problematic because we can only truly label people based on the societal roles they play, and the physical characteristics they portray within these roles. Because of this, we may alter our own appearances in order to be perceived in a certain way. We don't want other people to think we are something we're not, or something we refuse to define ourselves by. In Kate Chopin's "A Pair of Silk Stockings," a woman named Mrs. Sommers struggles to find balance in her life, which becomes apparent when she finds herself with unexpected money. Money can place limits on one's social class, but cannot define it because the ways in which people comfortably think, dress, and act are of much greater influence.

Class holds monetary boundaries because, reasonably, someone living in poverty would not have enough money to portray him or herself as upper class. However, it is important to distinguish between class and money, as the two cross paths but are not intertwined. While attitude is a large contributor to social class, it is a multilayer concept that cannot exist solely based on attitude. It is possible for an individual to identify with the morals and values of a social class to which he or she does not belong, but due to the limits of money, individuals of drastically different social classes would not be able to identify in terms of the experiences through which these values were applied. Paul Fussell states, "I have known some very rich people who remain stubbornly middle-class. Which is to say they remain terrified at what others think of them, and to avoid criticism are obsessed with doing everything right"(39). This emphasizes the fact that money has power in

determining class, because the more money you have, the more of a choice you have in your social class. The rich can share values with the middle class, and therefore be middle class, but the poor cannot share values with the middle class, and therefore become middle class; or at least be recognized as so.

In “A Pair of Silk Stockings,” Mrs. Sommers’ comes into new money and immediately goes out and treats herself to new clothing and experiences, despite initially debating investment. Chopin states, “she did not wish to act hastily, to do anything she might afterward regret” (1), and then goes on to explain that “the neighbors sometimes talked of certain ‘better days’ that little Mrs. Sommers had known before she had ever thought of being Mrs. Sommers. She herself indulged in no such morbid retrospection. She had no time—no second of time to devote to the past. The needs of the present absorbed her every faculty” (1). This suggests that Mrs. Sommers is familiar with more stable times, in which she better identified with the middle or upper-middle class. So, when Mrs. Sommers finds herself with a new sum of money, she could not resist her temptations. Having money caused her to act more leisurely, and thus, have time for herself. By making time for herself, she is for once being true to herself, which her previous situation prevented her from doing. However, living in the moment can be dangerous to those who are financially struggling, as hedonistic spending can have serious consequences.

Mrs. Sommers fears her appearance will cause others to be surprised and confused, which shows she is uncomfortable in the social position she places herself in. By wearing silk stockings and gloves to a fancy restaurant, she is doing something she is unfamiliar with—something she therefore feels like she shouldn’t be doing, as if dressing and acting in this way makes her feel guilty of misrepresenting herself, or afraid of being “caught” trying to “pass” as something she’s not. If she were comfortable acting or dressing like this, she would do so without thinking twice. When our actions are unnatural, we often wonder if others can tell we don’t fit in, which is exactly what Mrs. Sommers is experiencing. Paul Fussell suggests that a large part of class is how you portray yourself, by comparing a “blue-collar” family to a “white-collar” family—two families with completely

different social classes, yet similar income. While money normally prevents Mrs. Sommers from portraying herself as higher class, as long as she has money to purchase cultural signifiers of higher class, she can “pass” as something she is not naturally. However, one’s class is not defined by what he or she can pass for, but rather what is natural and comfortable. Class is like using a fake ID: you can pass as something you’re not, but it’s scary the first few times, and you must surround yourself with unfamiliar people in order for it to work. For example, if anyone from Mrs. Sommers’ neighborhood saw her acting this way, she could not pass as higher class.

Fussell describes the middle class as “anxious about offending”(39); a characteristic Mrs. Sommers portrays, alongside characteristics of the low-prole class. This highlights that Mrs. Sommers identified with the middle class at another point in her life, but also emphasizes that class is flexible. Paul Fussell’s analysis of classes works from a general standpoint, but there may be outliers. Mrs. Sommers’ class-anxiety may not be characteristic of her actual social class, but representative of her personality. While it is easy to assume all members of a social class are exactly alike, it is beliefs and values that are shared, and not personalities. Personality is one of the few clear differentiating factors within social class, but it often goes unrecognized by society because people of different social classes do not often interact on personal levels. When passing by a given stranger, all we have to judge this person by is his or her appearance. Misperception allows us to pass as classes we are not naturally.

Because different people (or people of different social classes) associate different things with class, discrepancies may arise between the classes we think we are and the classes others think we are. For Mrs. Sommers, going out and buying new stockings and gloves, and treating herself to lunch and a play were things she usually only fantasized about. Coming into new money gave her the opportunity to pass as what she *recognized* as upper-middle or even upper class. So, while “it’s less money than taste and knowledge and perceptiveness that determine class”(28), it’s often money that allows people to further their knowledge or improve their appearances, such that class may shift. Cultural signifiers, such as the silk stockings and new gloves Mrs. Sommers wore, are representative

of different social classes, so by utilizing cultural signifiers of class, people can alter the way others perceive them.

Much of class perception is stereotype-based. Stereotypes make labels unavoidable, and this class-consciousness leads class members to feed into their own stereotypes to avoid being misrepresented. However, stereotypes only go as far as the surface, so when Mrs. Sommers is able to go without being recognized as an outsider to the restaurant's usual market, she passes because her struggle to support her family is not visible. Through Mrs. Sommers' experiences in "A Pair of Silk Stockings," it is evident that money allows individuals to pass as different classes, but does not allow them to actually be different classes. Class perception is flexible, but class itself is less so.

**ETS 181 Footnote Project Part One: Footnotes
Student B**

A Pair of Silk Stockings

by

Kate Chopin (1851-1904)

Bibliographic Notes: First published in the early 1890s, and collected in *Bayou Folk* in 1894.

Little Mrs Sommers one day found herself the unexpected possessor of fifteen dollars. It seemed to her a very large amount of money, and the way in which it stuffed and bulged her worn old *porte-monnaie* gave her a feeling of importance such as she had not enjoyed for years.⁶

The question of investment was one that occupied her greatly. For a day or two she walked about apparently in a dreamy state, but really absorbed in speculation and calculation. She did not wish to act hastily, to do anything she might afterward regret. But it was during the still hours of the night when she lay awake revolving plans in her mind that she seemed to see her way clearly toward a proper and judicious use of the money.

A dollar or two should be added to the price usually paid for Janie's shoes, which would insure their lasting an appreciable time longer than they usually did. She would buy so and so many yards of percale for new shirt waists for the boys and Janie and Mag. She had intended to make the old ones do by skillful patching. Mag should have another gown. She had seen some beautiful patterns, veritable bargains in the shop windows. And still there would be left enough for new stockings – two pairs apiece – and what darning that would save for a while! She would get caps for the boys and sailor-hats for the girls. The vision of her little brood looking fresh and dainty and new for once in their lives excited her and made her restless and wakeful with anticipation.

The neighbors sometimes talked of certain 'better days' that little Mrs. Sommers had known before she had ever thought of being Mrs. Sommers. She herself indulged in no such morbid retrospection. She had no time – no second of time to devote to the past. The needs of the present

⁶ The narrator describes Mrs. Sommers as small. Size plays an integral part in the description of goods and people. Mrs. Sommers feels this is a lot of money. This is the first indication to Mrs. Sommers' class and economic understanding. Weber's idea of determination of class situation by market situation connects to this concept. One's class situation in Weber's writings is defined by their economic interests and their access to income or "...a typical chance for supply of goods, external living conditions, and personal life experiences, in so far as this chance is determined by the amount of kind of power."(Weber, 57) It is inferred that Mrs. Sommers is not given independence on what class she falls into, she's married into it. The adjective from the beginning suggests that there is something weak or fragile about Mrs. Sommers, that as a woman she lacks the power to control her class status.

absorbed her every faculty. A vision of the future like some dim, gaunt monster sometimes appalled her, but luckily to-morrow never comes.⁷

Mrs. Sommers was one who knew the value of bargains; who could stand for hours making her way inch by inch toward the desired object that was selling below cost. She could elbow her way if need be; she had learned to clutch a piece of goods and hold it and stick to it with persistence and determination till her turn came to be served, no matter when it came.

But that day she was a little faint and tired. She had swallowed a light luncheon – no! when she came to think of it, between getting the children fed and the place righted, and preparing herself for the shopping bout, she had actually forgotten to eat any luncheon at all!

She sat herself upon a revolving stool before a counter that was comparatively deserted, trying to gather strength and courage to charge through an eager multitude that was besieging breastworks of shirting and figured lawn. An all-gone limp feeling had come over her and she rested her hand aimlessly upon the counter. She wore no gloves. By degrees she grew aware that her hand had encountered something very soothing, very pleasant to touch. She looked down to see that her hand lay upon a pile of silk stockings. A placard near by announced that they had been reduced in price from two dollars and fifty cents to one dollar and ninety-eight cents; and a young girl who stood behind the counter asked her if she wished to examine their line of silk hosiery. She smiled, just as if she had been asked to inspect a tiara of diamonds with the ultimate view of purchasing it. But she went on feeling the soft, sheeny luxurious things – with both hands now, holding them up to see them glisten, and to feel them glide serpent-like through her fingers.

Two hectic blotches came suddenly into her pale cheeks. She looked up at the girl.

“Do you think there are any eights-and-a-half among these?”

There were any number of eights-and-a-half. In fact, there were more of that size than any other. Here was a light-blue pair; there were some lavender, some all black and various shades of tan and gray. Mrs Sommers selected a black pair and looked at them very long and closely. She pretended to be examining their texture, which the clerk assured her was excellent.

“A dollar and ninety-eight cents,” she mused aloud. “Well, I’ll take this pair.” She handed the girl a five-dollar bill and waited for her change and for her parcel. What a very small parcel it was! It seemed lost in the depths of her shabby old shopping-bag.

Mrs Sommers after that did not move in the direction of the bargain counter. She took the elevator, which carried her to an upper floor into the region of the ladies' waiting-rooms. Here, in a retired corner, she exchanged her cotton stockings for the new silk ones which she had just bought. She was not going through any acute mental process or reasoning with herself, nor was she striving to explain to her satisfaction the motive of her action. She was not thinking at all. She seemed for the time to

⁷ Chopin recognizes Mrs. Sommers ability to look ahead in order to prepare for her future and not back at what she has lost. This is could be an indicator to her class status. She does not have as much leisure time to spend thinking about insignificant history. Why is the future a monster for Mrs. Sommers? It's described as dark and thin, another reference to smaller size in relation to her class and responsibilities. Size is mentioned at other moments in the story relative to an object that concerns a higher class such as the food she eats at lunch or a small handkerchief she dries her eyes with. The relationship between these words to the plot can explain Mrs. Sommers own insignificance to the caste system.

be taking a rest from that laborious and fatiguing function and to have abandoned herself to some mechanical impulse that directed her actions and freed her of responsibility.⁸

How good was the touch of the raw silk to her flesh! She felt like lying back in the cushioned chair and reveling for a while in the luxury of it. She did for a little while. Then she replaced her shoes, rolled the cotton stockings together and thrust them into her bag. After doing this she crossed straight over to the shoe department and took her seat to be fitted.

She was fastidious. The clerk could not make her out; he could not reconcile her shoes with her stockings, and she was not too easily pleased. She held back her skirts and turned her feet one way and her head another way as she glanced down at the polished, pointed-tipped boots. Her foot and ankle looked very pretty. She could not realize that they belonged to her and were a part of herself. She wanted an excellent and stylish fit, she told the young fellow who served her, and she did not mind the difference of a dollar or two more in the price so long as she got what she desired.

It was a long time since Mrs Sommers had been fitted with gloves. On rare occasions when she had bought a pair they were always ‘bargains’, so cheap that it would have been preposterous and unreasonable to have expected them to be fitted to the hand.

Now she rested her elbow on the cushion of the glove counter, and a pretty, pleasant young creature, delicate and deft of touch, drew a long-wristed ‘kid’ over Mrs Sommers's hand. She smoothed it down over the wrist and buttoned it neatly, and both lost themselves for a second or two in admiring contemplation of the little symmetrical gloved hand. But there were other places where money might be spent.

There were books and magazines piled up in the window of a stall a few paces down the street. Mrs Sommers bought two high-priced magazines such as she had been accustomed to read in the days when she had been accustomed to other pleasant things.⁹ She carried them without wrapping. As well as she could she lifted her skirts at the crossings. Her stockings and boots and well fitting gloves had worked marvels in her bearing – had given her a feeling of assurance, a sense of belonging to the well-dressed multitude.

⁸ The day Mrs. Sommers has is, for the most part, entirely private. The narrator supplies very little insight into her past and present. In these line, when Mrs. Sommers puts on the stockings there is no recollection of the responsibilities of her present. It a very isolated day. Why must she be so aware of her isolation? She is alone when she receives the money, and alone when she embraces the facade of being of a class she cannot belong to. It must be a reserved act to defy one's class. Without that, one's true ranking can be revealed and Mrs. Sommers would be seen as a fraud. Here in this small corner she hung up her old stockings in order to revert back to a lifestyle that was familiar, but not in her present. Mrs. Sommers cannot defy her class without the feeling that she will be caught as something society believes she isn't.

⁹ Mrs. Sommers craves her former lifestyle. She knows what magazines to buy, what clothes to wear, how to carry herself to pull off this temporary illusion. This return can be explained by Weber's theory on status pertaining to the style of life, where if one pretends to be in a certain status they will receive that honor through the act of mere qualification. By embracing the status privileges she is able to be assumed as of a higher status, but without the financial support she cannot maintain those expectations of eating specific foods and dressing more for quality than value. Weber's theory on a style of life is relevant here “In content, status honor is normally expressed by the fact that above all else a specific style of life can be expected from all those who wish to belong to the circle.”(Weber, 61) Her consumption of these goods throughout the day allows her to be considered a higher status but she lacks the connection between class and status; the economic support. Without that she cannot fully return to her old lifestyle.

She was very hungry. Another time she would have stilled the cravings for food until reaching her own home, where she would have brewed herself a cup of tea and taken a snack of anything that was available. But the impulse that was guiding her would not suffer her to entertain any such thought.

There was a restaurant at the corner. She had never entered its doors; from the outside she had sometimes caught glimpses of spotless damask and shining crystal, and soft-stepping waiters serving people of fashion.

When she entered her appearance created no surprise, no consternation, as she had half feared it might. She seated herself at a small table alone, and an attentive waiter at once approached to take her order. She did not want a profusion; she craved a nice and tasty bite – a half dozen blue-points, a plump chop with cress, a something sweet – a crème-frappée, for instance; a glass of Rhine wine, and after all a small cup of black coffee.

While waiting to be served she removed her gloves very leisurely and laid them beside her. Then she picked up a magazine and glanced through it, cutting the pages with a blunt edge of her knife. It was all very agreeable. The damask was even more spotless than it had seemed through the window, and the crystal more sparkling. There were quiet ladies and gentlemen, who did not notice her, lunching at the small tables like her own. A soft, pleasing strain of music could be heard, and a gentle breeze, was blowing through the window. She tasted a bite, and she read a word or two, and she sipped the amber wine and wiggled her toes in the silk stockings. The price of it made no difference. She counted the money out to the waiter and left an extra coin on his tray, whereupon he bowed before her as before a princess of royal blood.

There was still money in her purse, and her next temptation presented itself in the shape of a matinée poster.

It was a little later when she entered the theatre, the play had begun and the house seemed to her to be packed. But there were vacant seats here and there, and into one of them she was ushered, between brilliantly dressed women who had gone there to kill time and eat candy and display their gaudy attire. There were many others who were there solely for the play and acting. It is safe to say there was no one present who bore quite the attitude which Mrs Sommers did to her surroundings. She gathered in the whole – stage and players and people in one wide impression, and absorbed it and enjoyed it. She laughed at the comedy and wept – she and the gaudy woman next to her wept over the tragedy. And they talked a little together over it. And the gaudy woman wiped her eyes and sniffled on a tiny square of filmy, perfumed lace and passed little Mrs Sommers her box of candy.

The play was over, the music ceased, the crowd filed out. It was like a dream ended. People scattered in all directions. Mrs Sommers went to the corner and waited for the cable car.

A man with keen eyes, who sat opposite to her, seemed to like the study of her small, pale face. It puzzled him to decipher what he saw there. In truth, he saw nothing – unless he were wizard enough to detect a poignant wish, a powerful longing that the cable car would never stop anywhere, but go on and on with her forever.¹⁰

¹⁰ The ending is abrupt, but allows for the narrator to comment on an interaction with someone from Mrs. Sommers' own class. The dichotomy between the person she had spent her day embracing and the person going home on the cable car is clear in this passage. There is a difference in mood, one is longing, the other impulsive. As a reader we are reminded of the "little" Mrs. Sommers described at the beginning of the story;

concerned for her family instead of her own needs. There is a sense of selfishness in taking care of yourself that the motherly Mrs Sommers does not hold. She fulfills the roll her children, husband, and class pull from her. The man here studies “her small pale face”. This pattern of weak and small returns with the reality of Mrs. Sommers’ class. The idea that man had looked to Mrs. Sommers and only seen a small pale face instead of the entire person standing before relates to the selectivity of a society of patriarchy, pulling only what they want from women. She rides the trolley reluctantly, as if she has no power over whether she goes home. Mrs. Sommers has realized the potential of her former knowledge of but cannot maintain this status because of her lack of economic knowledge her marriage.

ETS 181 Footnote Project Part Two: Essay Student B

In the late 19th century, the power of women in the caste system was virtually non-existent. A women's status relied on her family's, until marriage. In Kate Chopin's *A Pair of Silk Stockings*, gender effected the development of the main character's embrace of the style of life Max Weber defines. In his essay *Class, Status, and Party* Weber mentions gender, specifically females, very little unless it is in reference to the idea of intermarriage and that power on the movement of an individual through the castes. In analyzing Chopin's text through the theories in Weber's, it is clear that the patriarchal influences of the period motivate Mrs. Sommers to embrace her irresponsibility for economic sustainability and fulfill a status she is not prepared, but eager, to return to.

Chopin throughout this piece uses the idea of size and weight to describe Mrs. Sommers and the objects she desires. Mrs. Sommers herself is described as small and petite. The first word used to describe her is 'little' and when describing her future the words 'dim' and 'gaunt' are used. The pattern of the diminutive creates a dichotomy between the 'little' Mrs. Sommers and the enormity of all the opportunities she has to spend on luxurious high class products. In the last paragraph of the story Mrs. Sommers is riding the trolley home as a stranger sits across from her. The narrator states that he "seemed to like the study of her small, pale face"(Chopin, 4). She was not able to overcome that adjective. By purchasing a few expensive items and treating herself to a movie and luncheon she is still insignificant and small in relation to the caste system. As Weber puts it, "If mere economic acquisition and naked economic power still bearing the stigma of its extra-status origin could bestow upon anyone who has won it the same honor as those who are interested in status by virtue of style of life claim for themselves, the status order would be threatened at its very root."(Weber.65) The only way Mrs. Sommers would be able to maintain that status would be from direct infiltration of that status group through an institution, like marriage or familial connections.

Heightening her class relies on her marriage to her husband, instead of her own responsibilities to maintain her individual class. It is alluded to that she was once in a higher class

when she could afford the things she now dreamed about. “The neighbors sometimes talked of certain ‘better days’ that little Mrs. Sommers had known before she had ever thought of being Mrs. Sommers. She herself indulged in no such morbid retrospection.” (Chopin, 1) What else has Mrs. Sommers given up in the name of feminine duty to marry and become a homemaker? Does the duty of one’s gender disrupt the duty of one’s class? Weber mentions this idea of intermarriage and gender responsibility stating: “Within a status circle there is a question of intermarriage: the interest of the families in the monopolization of potential bridegrooms is at least of equal importance and is parallel to the interest in the monopolization of daughters. The daughters of the circle must be provided for.”(Weber.64) Mrs. Sommers did not choose the class she is now in and yet she is not able to leave it without financial independence. The only way, Weber states, to protect women in this social system is to marry them into the same social class they are from; therefore ensuring they continue the monopolization of employment and population. For Mrs. Sommers, the only escape the reader sees is through the generous anonymous donations and even then it is not a stable enough income to support the lifestyle Mrs. Sommers enjoys.

There is a lack of awareness of how rejecting her responsibilities for this money will affect her and her family’s future. After buying the silk stockings it’s apparent that she cannot control the urge to revert back to her old status. She is left alone at the whim of an economic phenomenon that she has not been prepared for. Mrs. Sommers is used to the bargain counter. She has, since her marriage to Mr. Sommers, rejected her old style of life. However, it is strange how naturally she is able to become a part of that life once more. The narrator describes it in the text as a lack of thought. “She was not thinking at all. She seemed for the time to be taking a rest from that laborious and fatiguing function and to have abandoned herself to some mechanical impulse that directed her actions and freed her of responsibility” (Chopin.2) In order for Mrs. Sommers to reject her responsibility she had to become completely absent from duty and embrace her impulses. Weber’s idea of status honor applies to the natural inclination Mrs. Sommers has to a higher style of lifestyle “Both properties and propertyless people can belong to the same status group, and frequently they

do with very tangible consequences.”(Weber.61) The consequence for Mrs. Sommers is the lack of stability for this lifestyle she has returned to. There is no continuous capability to maintain the style of life. She is able to pretend for a short amount of time, but at the end of the day her monopolization of goods differs from someone in that status group who uses class to maintain their status honor. In the last paragraph, the narrator describes the day as a dream. That the longings that Mrs. Sommers could not overcome the responsibility waiting for her at home, no matter how long she ignored it.

The only time she talks of the future is at the beginning of the story when she is planning for her children. She describes it as a monster. “She had no time – no second of time to devote to the past. The needs of the present absorbed her every faculty. A vision of the future like some dim, gaunt monster sometimes appalled her, but luckily to-morrow never comes.”(Chopin, 1) The narrator mentions Mrs. Sommers’ concerns for her children’s clothes and how she thought out a proper plan for the money. That’s what her present is: preparation for the future. Her present absorbs her leisure time that someone of a higher status would cling to. “... Stratification by status goes hand in hand with a monopolization of ideal and material goods or opportunities, in a manner we have come to know as typical. Besides the specific status honor, which always rests upon distance and exclusiveness, we find all sorts of material monopolies...the right to pursue certain non-professional dilettante artistic practices, e.g. to play certain musical instruments.”(Weber.64.2) The status privilege of being able to spend time on activities that aren’t concerned with ‘getting-by’ and searching for the cheapest items rather than the highest quality is what differentiates status privileges between Mrs. Sommers and a woman of better means. She is not able to embrace a different style of life because of her economic need and the responsibility to her husband and family.

This ideal that class and status for women is completely dependent on a husband’s, allowed Mrs. Sommers to reject her old status privileges and style of life. Without this there became a lack of control and knowledge for her opportunities for the money she came into. The piece can be seen as a commentary on the subjection of women into the role of home maker because of their lack of

intermarriage in their status group. Chopin wrote Mrs. Sommers unhappy and longing for a life she could never truly obtain because of her marriage and attachment to a social system that oppressed an entire gender to be at the mercy of another.

ETS 181 Footnote Project Part One: Intro and Footnotes Student C

1.1

Class struggles have been prominent over the entire course of history. Through analyzing both William Blake's poem "London" from *Songs of Innocence* and Karl Marx's *Manifesto of the Communist Party* many class rules and roles were evident. Both pieces of work used similar writing techniques such as repetition and imagery in order to describe the serious class restrictions and roles of society. As Blake describes the lower class environment of London, Marx explains the roles of both the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Many of the class characteristics were revealed in both passages by the use of Blake and Marx's language.

1.2

LONDON

I wander through each chartered street,
Near where the chartered ¹Thames does flow,
A mark in every face I meet,
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every man,
In every infant's cry of fear,
In every ²voice, in every ban,
The mind-forged manacles³ I hear:

How the chimney-sweeper's cry
Every blackening church appals,
And the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace-walls.⁴

But most, through midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born infant's tear,⁵
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

¹ The repetition of the word "chartered" is clearly found in the first two lines therefore relating to move two showing the relationship of different parts. Blake is highlighting the word chartered because he is setting up the scene of his poem. By telling the reader that the rights of the people living in London are under some type of order.

² The repetition used reveals the harsh mood of the poem. Looking for a pattern, I discover that Blake wants the reader to be well aware of the tough lives of the people of London. The speaker uses the repetition in order to grab the reader's attention so that he or she focuses on this certain aspect of the poem.

³ I did not catch the phrase "mind-forged manacles" during my first read of the poem. "Manacle" means a metal chain. The speaker's choice of words describes the mindset of imprisonment that people of London feel because of class restrictions.

⁴ In this stanza, Blake's language describes the tough life of the workers, yet talks about blood on palace-walls. The hard life of the workers and how Blake uses the image of their blood being on the palace-walls is important because it creates an image of class division.

⁵ I found the use of the speaker's senses here interesting. I thought about how the speaker does not describe what he sees, but rather what he hears. The speaker has hope for a new life of equality, but does not see it yet therefore making the sense of sound a very insightful tool.

ETS 181 Footnote Project Part One: Essay Student C

1.3

According to German Philosopher, Karl Marx, “the history of all previous societies has been the history of class struggles”. Throughout the course of time, class struggles have always been prominent in every society. In William Blake’s poem entitled “London”, from *Songs of Innocence*, the speaker walks through the streets of London in 1789. Through the streets, sounds, sights, and the speaker’s emotions reveal the strict class rankings that have set the tone for London. In relation to the emotions the speaker describes in “London”, Karl Marx’s *Manifesto of the Communist Party* explains the policy in which class divisions should be made and executed. Through analyzing both Blake and Marx’s work, it is clear that the class struggle, especially for the working class citizens is not very pleasant.

Noticing parts of a certain work and ask how they are related is a very revealing part of analyzing texts. By questioning what one notices, there is a high chance that the reader will look deeply into the text in order to analyze thoroughly. It is important to notice in Blake’s poem “London” the repetition in lines one and two of the first stanza. In these lines the speaker “wander[s] through each chartered street, Near where the chartered Thames does flow”. I noticed how the word “chartered” was repeated twice. This repetition is important because the speaker is trying to translate a feeling or an important component of the entire poem to the reader. Here, when repeating the word chartered, the speaker is referring to the order and class rankings that are so obviously seen in the London society at the time. By opening up with the repetition of the word “charter, it is clear that the setting of the poem is set and that the speaker wants the reader to notice that the life of someone living in London pertains to a certain class ranking or order. This related to Marx’s work *Manifesto of the Communist Party* in such a way that Marx used the same repetition tool while describing the class

role of the bourgeoisie. Marx specifically repeated “the bourgeoisie” at the beginning of multiple paragraphs in order to show the strict uniformity of society.

Patterns often reveal the mood of the speaker or details about the setting. In stanza two of “London”, the speaker repeats the words “In every” three times in a row. This repetition creates a pattern. Following each “In every” is a description of something unpleasant. For example, the speaker hears “In every infant’s cry of fear”. The pattern in this poem reveals an unsettling and unpleasant situation. As the reader, it is easy to concur that the people of London have very hard lives. The pattern of repetition that Blake portrays in stanza number two of “London” reveals to the reader that living in London is hard, especially for lower class citizens. In relation to Marx’s views of communism, Marx describes the proletariat as being very hard working. One can concur that the life of a proletariat worker at times is not pleasant because they “live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labour increases capital” (Marx, 7). This harsh lifestyle leads to an unpleasant grueling lifestyle similar to the one described in Blake’s poem.

The phrase “mind-forged manacles” in stanza number three of Blake’s poem revealed to be an extensive phrase. A “manacle” is a metal chain. This phrase emphasizes the fact that the speaker notices that many of the lower class people of London feel imprisoned by the strict class system like they are tied in chains. Many do not realize that they can rebel against the monarchy if they choose to. Thus, I think it is important to realize that the speaker chose the phrase to highlight the fact that many under class citizens feel as though they are trapped, yet they just need to gain the courage to stand against the class system. This is a very important component to Blake’s poem. In relation to Marx, Marx describes the working proletariat as becoming “an appendage of the machine” (Marx, 7). The way Marx describes the proletariat as working as a machine relates directly to how the speaker in Blake’s poem feels as though he is trapped by the class limits.

In stanza number three I observed the language the speaker used to describe the lower class. The speaker talks about different types of lower class citizens such as a chimney-sweeper as well as a

soldier. Then, the speaker brings up the fact that this lower class working citizens' bloodstains the walls of the palace. Implementing move number three a reader should ask "So what if the walls are stained with blood?". Moving forward in thinking, the blood on the palace walls reveals the hard work that the chimneysweepers or the soldiers do, yet there is blood because the monarchy does not recognize these workers properly. The class system is not perfect if people are suffering such as the lower class is, so the speaker creates an image of stained perfection by putting blood on the palace walls. The order that the monarchy has set in might seem perfect to the upper class, yet the lower class is struggling. In relation, Marx describes the class duties between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat workers in such a uniform manner that from an outside perspective his views on society seem like they could be successful. However, if one were to look deeper into the lives of the proletariat the individuals probably have a very harsh and unrewarding life.

In stanza number four of Blake's poem, the speaker uses senses to describe the setting. The speaker "hear[s] how the youthful harlot's curse Blasts the new-born infant's ear". The speaker does not see any of this happening. This is important to note because it shows a sense of hope. The speaker can hear and imagine hope for a more equal class division. However, the speaker does not yet see anything happening about it so therefore it is almost false hope, which sets a sad tone for the poem. Marx also expresses a tone of hope in his manifesto while describing what his hopes are with the Communist Party.

Just as Marx observed, class struggles have always been prominent in societies throughout history. Through analyzing both William Blake's poem "London", and Marx's *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, it is clear that class struggles affect both the rich and the poor and make the lives of the working class incredibly hard.

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ETS 181

Major Project 1

William Blake Interpretation

1.1 In a poem written by William Blake titled “The Chimney Sweeper”, he writes about an adolescent boy and his fellow employees living a harsh life while working a low class job in order to support his family. However, there is more to this poem than this simple summary. In this piece, lies the ideas of what is presumed to be Paul Fussell’s description of the so called “Bottom Out of Sight Class”. Another analysis is the poet’s progressive use of similes and metaphors help the reader picture what the Tom Dacre, who is the main character of the poem, is feeling in regards to his current lifestyle. This poem experiences only two emotions which is one positive and one negative. The main theme in this piece is the amount of impact poverty can have on one person.

1.2 The passage below had many hidden clues and historical references that that author was able to use to convey Tom Dacre’s life as a Chimney Sweeper.

- When my mother died I was very young,
And my father 'sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry 'weep! 'Weep! 'Weep! 'Weep!²

¹ Parents who lived in poverty in this time period often brought their children into the work force in order to help contribute to the family income. This all took place way before child labor laws were implemented so it was not unusual to find a child as young 6 or 7 working this type of job. Single parents especially were no stranger to the idea of putting the children to work. "The Role of Children." Wellers Chimney Sweeps Stove Sales and Service RSS. Web. 23 Sept. 2015.

² In this line the narrator is expressing how young he was when he had entered the business of sweeping chimneys. “Weep, weep, weep,” as most people think is the sound an infant child or toddler makes as a way of expressing discomfort. However, it could also mean the quickness of how the narrator’s father put him to work before he was able to express his disapproval.

So your chimneys ³ I sweep⁴, and in soot⁵ I sleep.

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head,
That curled like a lamb's back, was shaved: so I said,
"Hush, Tom! never mind it, for when your head's bare,
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair."

And so he was quiet; and that very night,
As Tom was a-sleeping, he had such a sight, -
That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, and Jack,
Were all of them locked up in coffins of black⁶

And by came an angel who had a bright key,
And he opened the coffins and set them all free;⁷
Then down a green plain leaping, laughing, they run,
And wash in a river, and shine in the sun.

Then naked and white, all their bags left behind,

³ Chimney sweepers in this time period were mostly adolescent males who were poor and had contribute to the family income. Children were used only because they were small enough to fit through the chimney. The work conditions were horrible as they produced numerous amounts of health risk in these young workers. The amount of income produced from this occupation was drastically low as they barely made enough to support themselves. "The Role of Children." Wellers Chimney Sweeps Stove Sales and Service RSS. Web. 23 Sept. 2015.

⁴ Back in the 1700's and 1800's Chimney sweeping was a common job for young children. The type of employees one would find here would be somewhat like the "Bottom out of Sight Class" Paul Russell himself describes.

⁵ This is a powdery substance consisting largely of amorphous carbon produced by the incomplete burning of organic matter. Merriam-Webster. Merriam-Webster. Web. 23 Sept. 2015.

⁶ Most readers would think the poet is referring to the typical black coffins used to conceal corpses before being buried into the ground. However, Blake is talking about the Soot that is covering Dacre's fellow employees. After a hard day's work it is not often to find a chimney sweeper free of dirt and grim.

⁷ This is where the turning point of this poem beings. Tom Dacre envisions his former fellow employees engaging in an in more pleasant moment in the after world. Everyone is clean from soot with a smile on their face and free from the further misery labor. This soon leads toward the adjustment of his attitude on his next day on the job.

They rise upon clouds and sport in the wind;⁸
And the angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,
He'd have God for his father⁹, and never want joy.
And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark,
And got with our bags and our brushes to work.
Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy and warm;
So if all do their duty they need not fear harm¹⁰.

⁸ In terms of Christianity this is simply the vision of what it looks like in the aftermath of death for a person who on the path to the heavens. You are striped of your current clothing as you are guided by the light to take you above the clouds that cover heaven.

⁹ One who is Christian simply believes that if you engage in good behavior and follow the rules of the bible accordingly you will be granted everlasting asylum in haven where god will nature you.

¹⁰ Tom Dacre is in an upbeat sprit knowing that his pain and misery will not last an eternity. At this point he clearly welcomes death with open arms as he fears no potential harms that are headed his way. One thing is that he knows thing cannot possible get as worse as they already are. With heaven in his sight, he believes no matter what happen he will be in a better place with god. Usually most humans are not looking forward to death especially putting them in a good mood.

1.3

Thesis 1: The theme of this poem focuses on the realities of the Paul Fussell's idea of "Bottom Out of Sight Class" the traits of this class include constant distress as Tom Dacre seeks an end to his current nightmarish life. This is the lowest of the low where you would definitely find the narrator and Tom Dacre slaving away towards their miserable job, sleeping on dirt, and living on almost nothing. This idea seems interesting because poses the question how one would escape this lifestyle.

Thesis 2: Poverty can impact a human being to a point of praying for death or any other by means of ending their misery. Depending on what class you are brought up in, you are subject to different entitlements and fortunes. In the poem, once Tom Dacre gets a glimpse of his former employees in the enjoying what his vision of heaven is presumed, he returns to work the next day with a smile on his face knowing that his misery will not last forever. This can be an interesting subject to explore because poses many psychological questions.

Thesis 3: Children that grow up in the lower classes have a small chance of ever being successful. Back then, if one was not earning large amounts of money from their occupation, one was not able to be entitled to higher education, a house, a bright future, and most importantly respect. In the first few lines of the poem, we learn that the narrator is already dealing with poverty and adversity from losing his mother. He is forced to in the chimney sweeping business in order to his family make a living. This proves he has no time for school and no school means no education and no education means no way out of poverty.

Thesis 4: In the context of class, chimney sweeper part of the very low class group of people who only lived to work until their death soon came upon them. Both the narrator and Tom Dacre did not aspire to be anything else in life. In fact, it came to a point where one them, Tom Dacre,

could not wait to succumb to their dangerous developed health condition acquired from the amount of time spent cleaning chimneys. Interesting, enough is how early this mentality develops.

Thesis 5: The lifestyle of a person living in poverty can have emotional twists and turn. On one hand, you are sleeping in an untidy, small and uncomfortable living space while working a 14 hours with little pay. Not to mention the health risks due to the lack of safety presence in the work place. However, with the thought of death soon approaches, one can soon lose their ability to look on the dark side. Tom Dacre is one example of this statement. He knows that his days of misery will soon come to an end and he begins to have a new outlook on life. Poverty for some people is not always a depressing sight.

Major Paper #1

Professor Conrey

September, 2015

In Kate Chopin's "A Pair of Silk Stockings", we see how the ideologies of social classes from history up until now take a toll the sacrifices people have to make for what they want versus what they have. Throughout history, where you come from, what you have, and you economic standings have played a major role in deciphering you're social class and ranking within a society. This ranking is very strict; what you are born is what you are for the rest of your life due to the fact that moving between social classes was not very common, although Mrs. Sommers in this short story proves otherwise. Within this reading, we see how a woman copes with shifting negatively within social rankings. Going from having a lot to the bare minimum makes people have to change their mindsets and how and what they purchase and we see that within Mrs. Sommers, at least that's what the practical assumption would be; but what is said isn't always what it is perceived to be.

A Pair of Silk Stockings

by

Kate Chopin (1851-1904)

Bibliographic Notes: First published in the early 1890s, and collected in *Bayou Folk* in 1894.

Little Mrs Sommers one day found herself the unexpected possessor of fifteen dollars. ¹It seemed to her a very large amount of money, and the way in which it stuffed and bulged her worn old ²porte-monnaie gave her a feeling of importance such as she had not enjoyed for years.

The question of investment was one that occupied her greatly. For a day or two she walked about apparently in a dreamy state, but really absorbed in speculation and calculation. She did not wish to act hastily, to do anything she might afterward regret. But it was during the still hours of the night when she lay awake revolving plans in her mind that she seemed to see her way clearly toward a proper and judicious use of the money.

A dollar or two should be added to the price usually paid for Janie's shoes, which would insure their lasting an appreciable time longer than they usually did. She would buy so and so many yards of

¹ The amount of money that Mrs. Sommers is entitled to in this opening statement sets a descriptive picture of the world that she now lives in compared to what she used to. When you think about having 15 dollars right now as an average human in today's economy, typically don't see that as money you need to savor, it's more used as a nice extra amount of money to treat yourself to something special; Mrs. Sommers is not that case. Because it is very clear that Mrs. Sommers used to have the ability to spend more than what she has now; but having these fifteen dollars and feeling some type of "importance" validates her standing within society.

² The term "porte-monnaie" is the French word for a small pocketbook or purse of some greater value, typically never under \$100. Because she has some greater pride, on top of the fact that she is in possession of the \$15, this purse is clearly worth a larger value than someone in a high social class would own. What Mrs. Sommers is seen to be doing is deceiving society, trying to prove a point that even though she was once greater than what she is now, she is still the same Mrs. Sommers; or at least likes to try to be. What she is actually doing is hiding some sort of depression that she is not allowed to live the lavish life she used to live. She is trying to prove some point to society, so the fact that she gets to walk around with this expensive purse, and look like she can go and spend money in all of these different places, allowing her to feel better about herself, and the importance is for her own self-interest hiding her depression rather than hide her social ranking.

percale for new shirt waists for the boys and Janie and Mag. She had intended to make the old ones do by skilful patching. Mag should have another gown. She had seen some beautiful patterns, veritable bargains in the shop windows. And still there would be left enough for new stockings – two pairs apiece – and what darning that would save for a while! She would get caps for the boys and sailor-hats for the girls. The vision of her little brood looking fresh and dainty and new for once in their lives excited her and made her restless and wakeful with anticipation.

³The neighbors sometimes talked of certain ‘better days’ that little Mrs Sommers had known before she had ever thought of being Mrs Sommers. She herself indulged in no such morbid retrospection. She had no time – no second of time to devote to the past. The needs of the present absorbed her every faculty. A vision of the future like some dim, gaunt monster sometimes appalled her, but luckily to-morrow never comes.

Mrs Sommers was one who knew the value of bargains; who could stand for hours making her way inch by inch toward the desired object that was selling below cost. She could elbow her way if need be; she had learned to clutch a piece of goods and hold it and stick to it with persistence and determination till her turn came to be served, no matter when it came.

But that day she was a little faint and tired. She had swallowed a light luncheon – no! when she came to think of it, between getting the children fed and the place righted, and preparing herself for the shopping bout, she had actually forgotten to eat any luncheon at all!

She sat herself upon a revolving stool before a counter that was comparatively deserted, trying to gather strength and courage to charge through an eager multitude that was besieging breastworks of shirting and figured lawn. An all-gone limp feeling had come over her and she rested her hand aimlessly upon the counter. She wore no gloves. By degrees she grew aware that her hand had encountered something very soothing, very pleasant to touch. She looked down to see that her hand lay upon a pile of silk stockings. A placard near by announced that they had been reduced in price from two dollars and fifty cents to one dollar and ninety-eight cents; and a young girl who stood behind the counter asked her if she wished to examine their line of silk hosiery. ⁴She smiled, just as if she had been asked to inspect a tiara of diamonds with the ultimate view of purchasing it. But she went on feeling the soft, sheeny luxurious things – with both hands now, holding them up to see them glisten, and to feel them glide serpent-like through her fingers.

Two hectic blotches came suddenly into her pale cheeks. She looked up at the girl.

“Do you think there are any eights-and-a-half among these?”

³ The neighbors speaking about her “better days” can relate to the bourgeoisie versus proletariat relationship that Marx speaks about. The person Mrs.Sommers was “before she had ever thought of being Mrs.Sommers would have been a bourgeoisie according to Marx, and what she is now is proletariat. One important statement that Marx makes is that the proletariat are “relied upon” and that’s what gives them strength. Chopin talks about Mrs.Sommers’ kids, and how she would ration out the money to spend on them and their needs; making her the dependent for her kids. Her better days also have a deeper meaning. The better days equate to Mrs.Sommers’ youth; the times before she became the actual Mrs.Sommers, changing her social rankings marrying into a lower class which was usually extremely rare because one class typically didn’t associate with another.

⁴ Here, these stockings are making Mrs.Sommers feel like some sort of princess, with inference to the tiara and that with these stockings she will be seen as a “princess”; princess’ having all the qualities of the upper class where she came from. What it shows is that it’s not the quantity of item but its the quality of the item that attributes to upper-class privileges. There were a bunch of other stockings within the selection that can be assumed would all be the same sale price, why couldn’t she have picked a pair? Why did she thoroughly investigate the texture and feel of these silk ones? Silk is a classier fabric choice than others which can correlate to the upper class standings and what would make Mrs.Sommers deceive society with what she wears.

There were any number of eights-and-a-half. In fact, there were more of that size than any other. Here was a light-blue pair; there were some lavender, some all black and various shades of tan and gray. Mrs Sommers selected a black pair and looked at them very long and closely. She pretended to be examining their texture, which the clerk assured her was excellent.

"A dollar and ninety-eight cents," she mused aloud. "Well, I'll take this pair." She handed the girl a five-dollar bill and waited for her change and for her parcel. What a very small parcel it was! It seemed lost in the depths of her shabby old shopping-bag.

Mrs Sommers after that did not move in the direction of the bargain counter. She took the elevator, which carried her to an upper floor into the region of the ladies' waiting-rooms. ⁵ Here, in a retired corner, she exchanged her cotton stockings for the new silk ones which she had just bought. She was not going through any acute mental process or reasoning with herself, nor was she striving to explain to her satisfaction the motive of her action. She was not thinking at all. She seemed for the time to be taking a rest from that laborious and fatiguing function and to have abandoned herself to some mechanical impulse that directed her actions and freed her of responsibility.

How good was the touch of the raw silk to her flesh! ⁶ She felt like lying back in the cushioned chair and reveling for a while in the luxury of it. She did for a little while. Then she replaced her shoes, rolled the cotton stockings together and thrust them into her bag. After doing this she crossed straight over to the shoe department and took her seat to be fitted.

She was fastidious. The clerk could not make her out; he could not reconcile her shoes with her stockings, and she was not too easily pleased. She held back her skirts and turned her feet one way and her head another way as she glanced down at the polished, pointed-tipped boots. Her foot and ankle looked very pretty. She could not realize that they belonged to her and were a part of herself. She wanted an excellent and stylish fit, she told the young fellow who served her, and she did not mind the difference of a dollar or two more in the price so long as she got what she desired.

It was a long time since Mrs Sommers had been fitted with gloves. On rare occasions when she had bought a pair they were always 'bargains', so cheap that it would have been preposterous and unreasonable to have expected them to be fitted to the hand.

Now she rested her elbow on the cushion of the glove counter, and a pretty, pleasant young creature, delicate and deft of touch, drew a long-wristed 'kid' over Mrs Sommers's hand. She smoothed it down over the wrist and buttoned it neatly, and both lost themselves for a second or two in admiring contemplation of the little symmetrical gloved hand. But there were other places where money might be spent.

⁵ Here we can relate Mrs. Sommers changing to the ideologies discussed by Carver. According to Carver, ideology is the "material study of immaterial things, ideas". As though it seems that Mrs. Sommers is changing to wear something to allow her to be seen as an upper class woman again. Wearing something that someone in her current ranking would not wear, it could be that she is actually covering up her depression, as she is looking for something different. Similar to Carver's story "Neighbors", Bill changes into the neighbors' clothes, both male and female to escape reality and experience something different. Although that was done in a much more intimate context, Mrs. Sommers relates to that. Changing her stockings allows her to escape the reality of her class ranking and re-experience the upper class lifestyle.

⁶ This is seen as another ideology from Carver's standpoint. Although it seems as she is literally laying out on this couch for the luxury of it, it could possibly be that she is actually taking a step back and taking a break from reality. Couches are known to be very comfortable and relaxing, a place you go to when you want to take a break during or at the end of the day to unwind and relax. From Mrs. Sommers' standpoint, being a part of the upper class "relaxes" her, almost makes her feel more at home than anything else. This unwinding is allowing her to relax, and take a break from the lower working class.

There were books and magazines piled up in the window of a stall a few paces down the street. Mrs Sommers bought two high-priced magazines such as she had been accustomed to read in the days when she had been accustomed to other pleasant things. She carried them without wrapping. As well as she could she lifted her skirts at the crossings. Her stockings and boots and well fitting gloves had worked marvels in her bearing – had given her a feeling of assurance, a sense of belonging to the well-dressed multitude.

She was very hungry. ⁷Another time she would have stilled the cravings for food until reaching her own home, where she would have brewed herself a cup of tea and taken a snack of anything that was available. But the impulse that was guiding her would not suffer her to entertain any such thought.

There was a restaurant at the corner. She had never entered its doors; from the outside she had sometimes caught glimpses of spotless damask and shining crystal, and soft-stepping waiters serving people of fashion.

⁸When she entered her appearance created no surprise, no consternation, as she had half feared it might. She seated herself at a small table alone, and an attentive waiter at once approached to take her order. She did not want a profusion; she craved a nice and tasty bite – a half dozen blue-points, a plump chop with cress, a something sweet – a crème-frappée, for instance; a glass of Rhine wine, and after all a small cup of black coffee.

While waiting to be served she removed her gloves very leisurely and laid them beside her. Then she picked up a magazine and glanced through it, cutting the pages with a blunt edge of her knife. It was all very agreeable. The damask was even more spotless than it had seemed through the window, and the crystal more sparkling. There were quiet ladies and gentlemen, who did not notice her, lunching at the small tables like her own. A soft, pleasing strain of music could be heard, and a gentle breeze, was blowing through the window. She tasted a bite, and she read a word or two, and she sipped the amber wine and wiggled her toes in the silk stockings. The price of it made no difference. She counted the money out to the waiter and left an extra coin on his tray, whereupon he bowed before her as before a princess of royal blood.

⁷ This shows Mrs.Sommers selfishness. She has three kids, that she stated the money she had would typically be divvied up to spend on needs for them, which she had already broken by purchasing the stockings and the gloves. Now she comes upon the man vs. self decision; knowing she has more money to spend, she can either go out and enjoy a “luxurious” dinner, again asserting herself to society that she has the money to spend and go out for dinner, or to follow through on her normal routine and go home and make dinner for her and her kids. Going home to make dinner would cause this day of escaping reality to end and have Mrs.Sommers return to her obvious depressing lifestyle in the lower class ranking. With that said, she makes the selfish decision to go out and enjoy a dinner, enjoy someone being at her service.

⁸ This paragraph enlightens readers to Mrs.Sommers being accepted into the upper class. Mrs.Sommers transitioned her economic standing into social standing and power; which would be classified as bourgeoisie ranking according to Marx. When she walked in it “made no surprise”, asserting that she would need something else to continue this “day trip from reality”, because she still was longing for the upper class lifestyle, even if it was only temporarily. She made her order very simplistic, but luxurious at the same time to assert some sort of dominance over this man (the waiter), the same was a bourgeoisie would assert themselves over a proletariat. Her being out at this restaurant was proving to her that mentally she could believe she was still belonging to the upper class, rather than her being home facing the true reality that she wasn’t.

⁹There was still money in her purse, and her next temptation presented itself in the shape of a matinee poster.

It was a little later when she entered the theatre, the play had begun and the house seemed to her to be packed. But there were vacant seats here and there, and into one of them she was ushered, between brilliantly dressed women who had gone there to kill time and eat candy and display their gaudy attire. There were many others who were there solely for the play and acting. It is safe to say there was no one present who bore quite the attitude which Mrs Sommers did to her surroundings. She gathered in the whole – stage and players and people in one wide impression, and absorbed it and enjoyed it. She laughed at the comedy and wept – she and the gaudy woman next to her wept over the tragedy. And they talked a little together over it. And the gaudy woman wiped her eyes and sniffled on a tiny square of filmy, perfumed lace and passed little Mrs Sommers her box of candy.

The play was over, the music ceased, the crowd filed out. It was like a dream ended. People scattered in all directions. Mrs Sommers went to the corner and waited for the cable car.

A man with keen eyes, who sat opposite to her, seemed to like the study of her small, pale face. It puzzled him to decipher what he saw there. ¹⁰In truth, he saw nothing – unless he were wizard enough to detect a poignant wish, a powerful longing that the cable car would never stop anywhere, but go on and on with her forever.

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⁹ The metaphoric comparison between the money and the matinee poster is used to show that Mrs. Sommers still has the ability to escape her reality; which is what she does next. Instead of preserving this money, she continues to spend it to continue to prove to society that she does indeed have the money that an upper class citizen has and has no problem spending it. In her mind, if Mrs. Sommers didn't spend her money on this play, everyone around her would take note that she was "different" in the sense that she was skimping out on an event that most upper-class people would attend, and that mentally was not sitting right with Mrs. Sommers; which is why she attended the play.

¹⁰ As much as Mrs. Sommers wanted to wish to live the upper class like, she is the only one who could actually "see" what she feels, and her intentions on deceiving society are ultimately failing. This man saw right through Mrs. Sommers "act", seeing the truth in her face. Her face was playing the role of a mask, that this man saw right through, seeing the reality that she was not party of the upper class rankings. The cable car represents Mrs. Sommers wish, and her escape of reality. Saying that "the cable car would never stop anywhere, but go one and on with her forever" creates the imagery for her longing desire to remain in the upper class and not have to return to her actual lower class life. This wish would carry on with her forever, but she was only fooling herself, not the rest of society.

Theses Statements:

- Although 15 dollars does not seem like a lot of money, to a lower class person like Mrs.Sommers it has some significance, thus proving importance is greater than value. — This can be proven through investigating all the things Mrs.Sommers spent her money on.
- Escaping true reality by falsely appearing as a different class ranking is done to mask the mental disorder of depression.— Going back to things she spent her money on and truly investigating what the man saw in Mrs.Sommers that she thought no one else would notice.

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9/16/15

Introduction to the Project: Neighbors

On the surface, “Neighbors,” by Raymond Carver, appears to be a simple story illustrating the discontent of a simple couple. The footnote process, however, reveals that the story is Carver’s comment on the nature of social class: not only do we consent to the existence of social class, we perpetuate and validate it through our own actions. Carver uses the motif of mirrors to elude to the consequences of willingly participating in the roles assigned to us- what do we lose when we settle into these social roles? At it’s core, “Neighbors” is a simple story of cause and effect: while pre-established social roles, to the lucky like Bill and Arlene, provide security and stability, there *is* a loss of identity that we experience when we allow ourselves to be consumed by constructed labels and expectations.

NEIGHBORS

By Raymond Carver

From the collection *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?*, 1963

Bill and Arlene Miller were a happy couple.¹ But now and then they felt they alone among their circle had been passed by somehow, leaving Bill to attend to his bookkeeping duties and Arlene occupied with secretarial chores.² They talked about it sometimes, mostly in comparison with the lives of their neighbors, Harriet and Jim Stone.³ It seemed to the Millers that the Stones lived a fuller and brighter life. The Stones were always going out for dinner, or entertaining at home, or traveling about the country somewhere in connection with Jim's work.

The Stones lived across the hall from the Millers. Jim was a salesman for a machine-parts firm and often managed to combine business with pleasure trips, and on this occasion the Stones would be away for ten days, first to Cheyenne, then on to St. Louis to visit relatives. In their absence, the Millers would look after the Stones' apartment, feed Kitty, and water the plants.

Bill and Jim shook hands beside the car. Harriet and Arlene held each other by the

¹ In the 1970's, the time the story takes place, an overwhelming majority of married Americans, about 70%, considered themselves "happy." See Wetzel 5-7. Despite Nixon expanding the Vietnam War, growing anti-desegregation riots and other political problems, most Americans couples considered themselves happy. The syntactic simplicity of this first line, juxtaposed by the complexity of the word "happy" speaks to the intensity of social roles. Couples, especially those within the various subcategories of the middle class, were expected to embody this socially constructed idea of "happy." This simple structure of this sentence speaks to how the word "happy" lost meaning due to its misuse and overuse. Arlene and Bill are both happy and continually striving to be happier- although no one, not even them, really knows what this means.

² This line seems to be about the impermeability of gender roles during this time, but it could also be about the humdrum and lackluster lives that Americans in this class experienced. For a middle class American, life could most accurately be described as "simply comfortable." See Schulman. The days of Bill and Arlene revolve around "bookkeeping" and "secretarial chores." Carver might be using this line to add some substance to the idea that Bill and Arlene are experiencing something more substantial than mere boredom and envy- there is some truth to the notion that they are lacking fulfillment. Like real middle class couples in the 70's, pinnacle moments in their lives could be deduced to simple tasks like "bookkeeping." This sentence adds merit to the idea that despite have more fortunate lives than most, unfulfillment is a very real issue.

³ From the onset of the story, we can see that Arlene and Bill measure their happiness on the scale of other people's lives. In actuality, they measure their happiness by the standards of what they've been told a "happy couple" looks like; a term they have come to equate with the Stones. In doing this, they have set themselves up for failure: happiness is inherently subjective, thus, no two "happiness" can be the same. Arlene and Bill will never be the Stones because the Stones- the perfect couple with a perfect home and a perfect life- do not actually exist. The couple has sacrificed something by constantly searching for validation in a false set of ideals. Bill and Arlene are repeatedly reminded that their lives are missing something they cannot quite put their fingers on. This is not a just a couple simply comparing themselves to their neighbors- this is two people searching for identity and meaning.

elbows and kissed lightly on the lips.

"Have fun," Bill said to Harriet.

"We will," said Harriet. "You kids have fun too." Arlene nodded.

Jim winked at her. "Bye, Arlene. Take good care of the old man."

"I will," Arlene said.

"Have fun," Bill said.

"You bet," Jim said, dipping Bill lightly on the arm. "And thanks again, you guys."

The Stones waved as they drove away, and the Millers waved too.

"Well, I wish it was us," Bill said.

"God knows, we could use a vacation," Arlene said.

She took his arm and put it around her waist as they climbed the stairs to their apartment.

After dinner Arlene said, "Don't forget. Kitty gets liver flavor the first night." She stood in the kitchen doorway folding the handmade tablecloth that Harriet had bought for her last year in Santa Fe.

Bill took a deep breath as he entered the Stones' apartment. The air was already heavy and it was vaguely sweet. The sunburst dock over the television said half past eight. He remembered when Harriet had come home with the dock, how she had crossed the hall to show it to Arlene, cradling the brass case in her arms, and talking to it through the tissue paper as if it were an infant.

Kitty rubbed her face against his slippers and then turned onto her side, but jumped up quickly as Bill moved to the kitchen and selected one of the stacked cans from the gleaming drainboard. Leaving the cat to pick at her food, he headed for the bathroom. He looked at himself in the mirror and then dosed his eyes and then looked again.⁴ He opened the medicine chest. He found a container of pills and read the label – Harriet Stone. One each day as directed – and slipped it into his pocket. He went back to the kitchen, drew a pitcher of water, and returned to the living room. He finished watering,

⁴ This is the first time the mirror motif appears in the text. Mirrors typically represent a lost of identity, but in this case, the mirror seems to be reflective of identity dysphoria. Bill needs to look at himself multiple times, which, alone, would be insignificant. But his need to do double takes is further evidence of this idea that validating social roles compromises one's identity. Reflections are definite, concrete and unchanging. But as Bill's urge to settle into the lives of his neighbor's grows, his ability to recognize himself weakens. Thus, the mirror symbol chronicles Bills gradual loss of identity.

set the pitcher on the rug, and opened the liquor cabinet. He reached in back for the bottle of Chivas Regal. He took two drinks from the bottle, wiped his lips on his sleeve, and replaced the bottle in the cabinet.

Kitty was on the couch sleeping. He switched off the lights, slowly dosing and checking the door. He had the feeling he had left something.⁵

"What kept you?" Arlene said. She sat with her legs turned under her, watching television.

"Nothing. Playing with Kitty," he said, and went over to her and touched her breasts.

"Let's go to bed, honey," he said.

The next day Bill took only ten minutes of the twenty-minute break allotted for the afternoon and left at fifteen minutes before five. He parked the car in the lot just as Arlene hopped down from the bus. He waited until she entered the building, then ran up the stairs to catch her as she stepped out of the elevator.

"Bill! God, you scared me. You're early," she said. He shrugged. "Nothing to do at work," he said.

She let him use her key to open the door. He looked at the door across the hall before following her inside.

"Let's go to bed," he said.

"Now?" She laughed. "What's gotten into you?" "Nothing. Take your dress off." He grabbed for her awkwardly, and she said, "Good God, Bill."

He unfastened his belt.⁶

⁵ When looking at this story from an open mind, the notion that Bill experiences some sort of identity dysphoria does not seem unlikely. One of the main symptoms of identity dissociation are episodes of feeling disconnected or detached from one's body and thoughts. See Cleveland Clinic Foundation. That being said, Bill "feeling he had left something" is not just an isolated case of forgetfulness. This lack of direction and dysphoria serves as proof to the larger issue at hand: Bill's struggle to keep up with social norms is causing an identity crisis that can be seen through his physical difficulties.

⁶ Here, we again see evidence of Bill's increasing struggle with identity. On the surface, it may seem like Bill simply has an increased sexual appetite, and this scene is just evidence of a male dominated world where women are subjected to men. But this is double entendre also eludes to the transformation Bill has undergone by simply being in this household- by trying to force his idea of "happy" upon the Stones' lives and himself. Increased sexual appetite can be seen in people who feel powerless, aiming to gain control over their lives. See SAVE. Bill's need to suddenly be more intimate with Arlene illustrates his growing need to grasp control over what is happening. In his mind, living the life of the Stone's might be filling some deep need he has, but in actuality, it is this very notion causing this sort of detachment from reality. Sex, one of the most absolute instances of power and control, in this case serves as the means through which Bill tries to reconnect with reality.

Later they sent out for Chinese food, and when it arrived they ate hungrily, without speaking, and listened to records.

"Let's not forget to feed Kitty," she said.

"I was just thinking about that," he said. "I'll go right over."

He selected a can of fish flavor for the cat, then filled the pitcher and went to water. When he returned to the kitchen, the cat was scratching in her box. She looked at him steadily before she turned back to the litter. He opened all the cupboards and examined the canned goods, the cereals, the packaged foods, the cocktail and wine glasses, the china, the pots and pans. He opened the refrigerator. He sniffed some celery, took two bites of cheddar cheese, and chewed on an apple as he walked into the bedroom. The bed seemed enormous, with a fluffy white bedspread draped to the floor. He pulled out a nightstand drawer, found a half-empty package of cigarets and stuffed them into his pocket.⁷ Then he stepped to the closet and was opening it when the knock sounded at the front door.

He stopped by the bathroom and flushed the toilet on his way.

"What's been keeping you?" Arlene said. "You've been over here more than an hour."

"Have I really?" he said. "Yes, you have," she said.

"I had to go to the toilet," he said. "You have your own toilet," she said. "I couldn't wait," he said.

That night they made love again.

In the morning he had Arlene call in for him. He showered, dressed, and made a light breakfast. He tried to start a book. He went out for a walk and felt better. But after a while, hands still in his pockets, he returned to the apartment. He stopped at the Stones' door on the chance he might hear the cat moving about. Then he let himself in at his own door and went to the kitchen for the key.

Inside it seemed cooler than his apartment, and darker too. He wondered if the plants

⁷ In the 1970's, as the anti-tobacco wave picked up, smoking became a sign of not only economic wealth but rebellion and freedom. See CNN. By taking the cigarettes, it was not simply Bill's attempt and easing into the lives of his neighbors. It was also an attempt at slipping into the freedom, joy and rebellion that accompanied the image of a smoker. Bills transformation is holistic- he does not merely wish to look and *act* like his neighbors. There is a certain idea of Bill Miller that the character is trying to achieve. This cigarette box represents everything Bill aims to be and taking it illustrated his desperation to become this person.

had something to do with the temperature of the air. He looked out the window, and then he moved slowly through each room considering everything that fell under his gaze, carefully, one object at a time. He saw ashtrays, items of furniture, kitchen utensils, the clock. He saw everything. At last he entered the bedroom, and the cat appeared at his feet. He stroked her once, carried her into the bathroom, and shut the door.

He lay down on the bed and stared at the ceiling. He lay for a while with his eyes closed, and then he moved his hand under his belt. He tried to recall what day it was. He tried to remember when the Stones were due back, and then he wondered if they would ever return. He could not remember their faces or the way they talked and dressed. He sighed and with effort rolled off the bed to lean over the dresser and look at himself in the mirror.⁸

He opened the closet and selected a Hawaiian shirt. He looked until he found Bermudas, neatly pressed and hanging over a pair of brown twill slacks. He shed his own clothes and slipped into the shorts and the shirt. He looked in the mirror again. He went to the living room and poured himself a drink and sipped it on his way back to the bedroom. He put on a blue shirt, a dark suit, a blue and white tie, black wing-tip shoes. The glass was empty and he went for another drink.

In the bedroom again, he sat on a chair, crossed his legs, and smiled, observing himself in the mirror.⁹The telephone rang twice and fell silent. He finished the drink and took off the suit. He rummaged through the top drawers until he found a pair of panties and a brassiere. He stepped into the panties and fastened the brassiere, then looked through the closet for an outfit. He put on a black and white checkered skirt and tried to

⁸ Carver again returns to this motif of mirrors to illustrate how Bill's condition has gotten progressively worse. It is no longer a question of whether or no he can recognize himself, but whether he can distinguish himself from other people. In retrospect, the Stones have sort of disappeared from Bill's memory entirely. Bill's efforts to keep a handle on who is his- to separate himself from the Stones- are failing. Now, his condition has worsened to the point that he cannot separate his own identity from the role he is playing. In short, this mirror is evidence that the Bill who first appeared in the story is beginning to be replaced by someone else.

⁹ Again, the mirror shows us how Bill's loss of identity is rapidly worsening. Bill smiles with content as he looks at his own reflection- a reflection that, at its very core, belongs to someone else. This event is the pinnacle example of what we lose when we allow social roles to dictate our lives. Bill has gotten the house, the clothes, and the wife, but he has lost something else- himself. There is a price to be paid when we base our dreams and aspirations in false ideals and unattainable "norms." This price, as evident by Bill's large grin, is our own individuality. Bill Miller is only content being Jim Stone but that happiness did not come free- Bill had to sacrifice himself in order to believe that being his Jim was the only road to happiness.

zip it up. He put on a burgundy blouse that buttoned up the front. He considered her shoes, but understood they would not fit. For a long time he looked out the living-room window from behind the curtain. Then he returned to the bedroom and put everything away.

He was not hungry. She did not eat much, either. They looked at each other shyly and smiled. She got up from the table and checked that the key was on the shelf and then she quickly cleared the dishes.

He stood in the kitchen doorway and smoked a cigarette and watched her pick up the key.

"Make yourself comfortable while I go across the hall," she said. "Read the paper or something." She closed her fingers over the key. He was, she said, looking tired.

He tried to concentrate on the news. He read the paper and turned on the television. Finally he went across the hall. The door was locked.

"It's me. Are you still there, honey?" he called.

After a time the lock released and Arlene stepped outside and shut the door. "Was I gone so long?" she said.

"Well, you were," he said.

"Was I?" she said. "I guess I must have been playing with Kitty."

He studied her, and she looked away, her hand still resting on the doorknob.

"It's funny," she said. "You know-to go in someone's place like that."

He nodded, took her hand from the knob, and guided her toward their own door. He let them into their apartment.

"It *is* funny," he said.

He noticed white lint clinging to the back of her sweater, and the color was high in her cheeks. He began kissing her on the neck and hair and she turned and kissed him back.

"Oh, damn," she said. "Damn, damn," she sang, girlishly clapping her hands. "I just remembered. I really and truly forgot to do what I went over there to do. I didn't feed Kitty or do any watering." She looked at him. "Isn't that stupid?"

"I don't think so," he said. "Just a minute. I'll get my cigarets and go back with you."

She waited until he had closed and locked their door, and then she took his arm at the

muscle and said, "I guess I should tell you. I found some pictures."

He stopped in the middle of the hall. "What kind of pictures?"

"You can see for yourself," she said, and she watched him.

"No kidding." He grinned. "Where?" "In a drawer," she said.

"No kidding," he said.

And then she said, "Maybe they won't come back," and was at once astonished at her words.

"It could happen," he said. "Anything could happen."

"Or maybe they'll come back and ... " but she did not finish.

They held hands for the short walk across the hall, and when he spoke she could barely hear his voice.

"The key," he said. "Give it to me." "What?" she said. She gazed at the door. "The key," he said. "You have the key." "My God," she said, "I left the key inside."

He tried the knob. It was locked. Then she tried the knob. It would not turn. Her lips were parted, and her breathing was hard, expectant. He opened his arms and she moved into them.

"Don't worry," he said into her ear. "For God's sake, don't worry."

They stayed there. They held each other. They leaned into the door as if against a wind, and braced themselves.¹⁰

¹⁰ The couples last words to each other proves that in order to be happy within the constrains of social norms, one must give up a part of who they are. They have spent the last few days walking in the shoes of people who they aspired to be. After a while though, the couple starts to see the consequences of such actions- it becomes hard to see who you are when you are constantly trying to be someone else. These last lines closely resemble something someone might saying if someone was sick or dying. But in retrospect, people did die- the couple that Bill and Arlene were trying to mold themselves into died when Arlene left the keys inside the house. Now, they must struggle to come back to who they really are whilst facing the realities of their false dreams.

Thesis Statements

1. Bill and Arlene go through a loss of identity as they settle more and more into the roles of the Stones.

By the end of the story, both Bill and Arlene are struggling to recognize themselves. As a sort of Jekyll and Hyde paradox- the two are both stuck in the shoes of other people and simultaneously stuck without a concrete sense of self. The ease with which they settle into the lives of their neighbors parallels the ease with which their identities are diminished. If we analyze this progression, how eating the Stones' food and wearing their clothes correlate to Bill's need to check his reflection constantly, it would be interesting to see the patterns that appear. Even more interesting would be this sort of give and take wherein the Miller's gain something from being in the apartment, but lose something else internally.

2. Bill and Arlene's actions could simply be due to a need to explore themselves outside of the confines of societal norms- personified as their house.

At the start of the story, the narrator begins by telling us how Bill and Arlene's envy stemmed from something missing in their lives. It would be interesting to look at the story through the lens of two people who are giving into desires that have been repressed by social norms and expectations. This could be proven by looking at all the things the couple begins to do that would not be considered socially acceptable- i.e. Bill putting on women's clothing. The "vacation" that Bill and Arlene said they needed could just be a euphemism for a

place where they can explore the sides of themselves that have always been hidden. In doing this, we may be interested in what this reveals about that couple's actions- is it as odd as we perceive it to be or are these desires hidden within all of us?

3. Bills and Arlene's time at the Millers tested how social norms are merely arbitrary rules and trying to give meaning to them is pointless.

Bill and Arlene's time at the Stones' could also be looked at as an instance proving the arbitrary nature of social norms. The couple clearly tries to force themselves into the shoes of the ideal couple- one who is spontaneous, sexy and carefree. Yet, its is clear by the ending that the assimilation was not successful. This can work to prove the idea that there is no rhyme or reason to the things that society tells us is normal, and trying to fit ourselves into these little roles will only prove such fact. By exploring this idea, we might find that there is merit in the idea that playing along with the charade of societal roles has consequences.

4. The couples desire to live a more exciting and "brighter" life causes them to slowly revert back to a wild, primitive state.

If we look at the habits that Bill and Arlene develop over there short time at the Stones' we can see patterns. These patterns, increased and haphazard sexual desire, ravenous appetite, etc., strikingly resemble the habits of animals in the wild. Furthermore, their devastated and dramatic reaction to locking the key inside the Stones' apartment could similarly resemble the devastation a caged

animal might feel. Exploring this idea make make Bill and Arlene's experience seem more relatable and more human because as we are, we are simply all animals who have been civilized by structure and law.

5. Bill and Arlene's experience is a metaphor symbolizing the realization that we can never recreate the ideals in our minds.

We can look at Bill and Arlene's progressive change as a metaphor detailing the journey wherein people figure out that the dreams and ideas that live inside our minds can never be superimposed unto real life. By exploring this, the story becomes not just about a bored couple but about the plight of the human being- what happened when the dreams we base our lives upon prove to be unattainable? Where does one go from there?

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Required Texts for Unit One

Social Class Inventory¹

Please answer the following questions about your social class background. This will not be handed in and you will not be required to share your answers.

1. When you were growing up, what was your family's source(s) of income? (Investments, public assistance, parent(s)' or guardian(s)' salaries or wages, from what occupation(s)?)

2. Describe your home(s) and neighborhood(s) growing up. (Own vs. rent, amount of space inside and between houses or apartments, safety, condition etc.)

3. How does the education you are getting now compare with the education of others in your family in this generation, and in the previous two generations?

4. How was your family's leisure time spent when you were growing up? (Travel, camp, hobbies, sources of entertainment?)

¹ Adapted from *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, Second Edition, Routledge 2007

5. Circle five values or expectations from the list below that seem to be most valued in your family. Then underline five that seem to be least important:

getting by
making a good living
gaining social status or prominence
open communication among family members
going to a place of worship
keeping up with the neighbors
being physically fit or athletic
working out psychological issues through therapy
helping others
owning a home
being patriotic
physical appearance
being a professional
getting a high-school degree
getting a college degree
getting an advanced or professional degree
learning a trade
helping to advance the cause of one's racial, religious, cultural group
having good manners

being an entrepreneur
going to a good school
not being wasteful
getting married and having children
respecting law and order
defending your country
staying out of trouble with the law
being politically or socially aware
recognition
community service
saving money
making your money work for you
enjoying your money

6. Other values or expectations not listed above?

7. What you gained from your class background experience?

8. What has been hard for you from your class background?

9. What impact does your class background have on your current attitudes, behaviors, and feelings? (about money, work, relationships with people from the same class/from a different class, your sense of self, expectations about life, your politics, etc.).

10. What is your class Identity?²

Ruling/Upper Class: The stratum of people who hold positions of power in major institutions of the society.

Owning Class/Rich: The stratum of families who own income-producing assets sufficient to make paid employment unnecessary.

Upper-Middle Class: The portion of the middle class with higher incomes due to professional jobs and/or investment income.

Middle Class: The stratum of families for whom breadwinners' higher education and/or specialized skills brings higher income and more security than working class people have.

Lower-Middle Class: The portion of the middle class with lower and less stable incomes due to lower-skilled or unstable employment.

Working Class: The stratum of families whose income depends on hourly wages for labor, or on other non-managerial work or very small business activity that doesn't require higher education.

Poverty Class/Lower Working/Working Poor Class: The stratum of families with incomes persistently insufficient to meet basic human needs.

² Class identity is your predominant class experience at this point in your life. These are not fixed or absolute categories, but serve to help identify salient features of respective social class identities.

Please read the following:

Back in the days when everyone was old and stupid or young and foolish and me and Sugar were the only ones just right, this lady moved on our block with nappy hair and proper speech and no makeup. And quite naturally we laughed at her, laughed the way we did at the junk man who went about his business like he was some big-time president and his sorry-ass horse his secretary. And we kinda hated her too, hated the way we did the winos who cluttered up our parks and pissed on our handball walls and stank up our hallways and stairs so you couldn't halfway play hide-and-seek without a goddamn gas mask. Miss Moore was her name. The only woman on the block with no first name. And she was black as hell, cept for her feet, which were fish-white and spooky. And she was always planning these boring-ass things for us to do, us being my cousin, mostly, who lived on the block cause we all moved North the same time and to the same apartment then spread out gradual to breathe. And our parents would yank our heads into some kinda shape and crisp up our clothes so we'd be presentable for travel with Miss Moore, who always looked like she was going to church, though she never did. Which is just one of things the grown-ups talked about when they talked behind her back like a dog. But when she came calling with some sachet she'd sewed up or some gingerbread she'd made or some book, why then they'd all be too embarrassed to turn her down and we'd get handed over all spruced up. She'd been to college and said it was only right that she should take responsibility for the young ones' education, and she not even related by marriage or blood. So they'd go for it. Specially Aunt Gretchen. She was the main gofer in the family. You got some ole dumb shit foolishness you want somebody to go for, you send for Aunt Gretchen. She been screwed into the go-along for so long, it's a blood-deep natural thing with her. Which is how she got saddled with me and Sugar and Junior in the first place while our mothers were in a la-de-da apartment up the block having a good ole time.

Taking some of the assumptions you bring to class, and some of the definitions given earlier in this handout, please respond to the following:

What social class is Ms. Moore? How do you know?

What social class is the narrator? How do you know?

What else do you assume about the narrator? Why?

URL for PBS Newshour Quiz:
“Do You Live in a Bubble”

[goo.gl/Z6Dnh4](https://www.pbs.org/newshour/quiz/do-you-live-in-a-bubble)

This is Water

David Foster Wallace

There are these two young fish swimming along, and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says, “Morning, boys, how's the water?” And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes, “What the hell is water?”

If at this moment, you're worried that I plan to present myself here as the wise old fish explaining what water is to you younger fish, please don't be. I am not the wise old fish. The immediate point of the fish story is that the most obvious, ubiquitous, important realities are often the ones that are the hardest to see and talk about. Stated as an English sentence, of course, this is just a banal platitude — but the fact is that, in the day-to-day trenches of adult existence, banal platitudes can have life-or-death importance. That may sound like hyperbole, or abstract nonsense.

A huge percentage of the stuff that I tend to be automatically certain of is, it turns out, totally wrong and deluded. Here's one example of the utter wrongness of something I tend to be automatically sure of: Everything in my own immediate experience supports my deep belief that I am the absolute center of the universe, the realest, most vivid and important person in existence. We rarely talk about this sort of natural, basic self-centeredness, because it's so socially repulsive, but it's pretty much the same for all of us, deep down. It is our default-setting, hard-wired into our boards at birth. Think about it: There is no experience you've had that you were not at the absolute center of. The world as you experience it is right there in front of you, or behind you, to the left or right of you, on your TV, or your monitor, or whatever. Other people's thoughts and feelings have to be communicated to you somehow, but your own are so immediate, urgent, *real* — you get the idea. But please don't worry that I'm getting ready to preach to you about compassion or other-directedness or the so-called “virtues.” This is not a matter of virtue — it's a matter of my choosing to do the work of somehow altering or getting free of my natural, hard-wired default-setting, which is to be deeply and literally self-centered, and to see and interpret everything through this lens of self.

People who can adjust their natural default-setting this way are often described as being “well adjusted,” which I suggest to you is not an accidental term.

Given the triumphal academic setting here, an obvious question is how much of this work of adjusting our default-setting involves actual knowledge or intellect. This question gets tricky. Probably the most dangerous thing about college education, at least in my own case, is that it enables my tendency to over-intellectualize stuff, to get lost in abstract arguments inside my head instead of simply paying attention to what's going on right in front of me. Paying attention to what's going on inside me. As I'm sure you guys know by now, it is extremely difficult to stay alert and attentive instead of getting hypnotized by the constant monologue inside your own head. Twenty years after my own graduation, I have come

gradually to understand that the liberal-arts cliché about “teaching you how to think” is actually shorthand for a much deeper, more serious idea: “Learning how to think” really means learning how to exercise some control over how and what you think. It means being conscious and aware enough to choose what you pay attention to and to choose how you construct meaning from experience. Because if you cannot exercise this kind of choice in adult life, you will be totally hosed. Think of the old cliché about “the mind being an excellent servant but a terrible master.” This, like many clichés, so lame and unexciting on the surface, actually expresses a great and terrible truth. It is not the least bit coincidental that adults who commit suicide with firearms almost always shoot themselves in the head. And the truth is that most of these suicides are actually dead long before they pull the trigger. And I submit that this is what the real, no-bull- value of your liberal-arts education is supposed to be about: How to keep from going through your comfortable, prosperous, respectable adult life dead, unconscious, a slave to your head and to your natural default-setting of being uniquely, completely, imperially alone, day in and day out.

That may sound like hyperbole, or abstract nonsense. So let's get concrete. The plain fact is that you graduating seniors do not yet have any clue what “day in, day out” really means. There happen to be whole large parts of adult American life that nobody talks about in commencement speeches. One such part involves boredom, routine, and petty frustration. The parents and older folks here will know all too well what I'm talking about.

By way of example, let's say it's an average day, and you get up in the morning, go to your challenging job, and you work hard for nine or ten hours, and at the end of the day you're tired, and you're stressed out, and all you want is to go home and have a good supper and maybe unwind for a couple of hours and then hit the rack early because you have to get up the next day and do it all again. But then you remember there's no food at home — you haven't had time to shop this week, because of your challenging job — and so now after work you have to get in your car and drive to the supermarket. It's the end of the workday, and the traffic's very

bad, so getting to the store takes way longer than it should, and when you finally get there the supermarket is very crowded, because of course it's the time of day when all the other people with jobs also try to squeeze in some grocery shopping, and the store's hideously, fluorescently lit, and infused with soul-killing Muzak or corporate pop, and it's pretty much the last place you want to be, but you can't just get in and quickly out: You have to wander all over the huge, overlit store's crowded aisles to find the stuff you want, and you have to maneuver your junky cart through all these other tired, hurried people with carts, and of course there are also the glacially slow old people and the spacey people and the ADHD kids who all block the aisle and you have to grit your teeth and try to be polite as you ask them to let you by, and eventually, finally, you get all your supper supplies, except now it turns out there aren't enough checkout lanes open even though it's the end-of-the-day-rush, so the checkout line is incredibly long, which is stupid and infuriating, but you can't take your fury out on the frantic lady working the register.

Anyway, you finally get to the checkout line's front, and pay for your food, and wait to get your check or card authenticated by a machine, and then get told to "Have a nice day" in a voice that is the absolute voice of *death*, and then you have to take your creepy flimsy plastic bags of groceries in your cart through the crowded, bumpy, littery parking lot, and try to load the bags in your car in such a way that everything doesn't fall out of the bags and roll around in the trunk on the way home, and then you have to drive all the way home through slow, heavy, SUV-intensive rush-hour traffic, etcetera, etcetera.

The point is that petty, frustrating crap like this is exactly where the work of choosing comes in. Because the traffic jams and crowded aisles and long checkout lines give me time to think, and if I don't make a conscious decision about how to think and what to pay attention to, I'm going to be pissed and miserable every time I have to food-shop, because my natural default-setting is the certainty that situations like this are really all about *me*, about my hungriness and my fatigue and my desire to just get home,

and it's going to seem, for all the world, like everybody else is just *in my way*, and who are all these people in my way? And look at how repulsive most of them are and how stupid and cow-like and dead-eyed and nonhuman they seem here in the checkout line, or at how annoying and rude it is that people are talking loudly on cell phones in the middle of the line, and look at how deeply unfair this is: I've worked really hard all day and I'm starved and tired and I can't even get home to eat and unwind because of all these stupid god-damn *people*.

Or, of course, if I'm in a more socially conscious form of my default-setting, I can spend time in the end-of-the-day traffic jam being angry and disgusted at all the huge, stupid, lane-blocking SUV's and Hummers and V-12 pickup trucks burning their wasteful, selfish, forty-gallon tanks of gas, and I can dwell on the fact that the patriotic or religious bumper stickers always seem to be on the biggest, most disgustingly selfish vehicles driven by the ugliest, most inconsiderate and aggressive drivers, who are usually talking on cell phones as they cut people off in order to get just twenty stupid feet ahead in a traffic jam, and I can think about how our children's children will despise us for wasting all the future's fuel and probably screwing up the climate, and how spoiled and stupid and disgusting we all are, and how it all just *sucks*, and so on and so forth...

Look, if I choose to think this way, fine, lots of us do — except that thinking this way tends to be so easy and automatic it doesn't *have* to be a choice. Thinking this way is my natural default-setting. It's the automatic, unconscious way that I experience the boring, frustrating, crowded parts of adult life when I'm operating on the automatic, unconscious belief that I am the center of the world and that my immediate needs and feelings are what should determine the world's priorities. The thing is that there are obviously different ways to think about these kinds of situations. In this traffic, all these vehicles stuck and idling in my way: It's not impossible that some of these people in SUV's have been in horrible auto accidents in the past and now find driving so traumatic that their therapist has all but ordered them to get a huge, heavy SUV so they can feel safe enough to

drive; or that the Hummer that just cut me off is maybe being driven by a father whose little child is hurt or sick in the seat next to him, and he's trying to rush to the hospital, and he's in a way bigger, more legitimate hurry than I am — it is actually *I* who am in *his* way. Or I can choose to force myself to consider the likelihood that everyone else in the supermarket's checkout line is just as bored and frustrated as I am, and that some of these people probably have much harder, more tedious or painful lives than I do, overall.

Again, please don't think that I'm giving you moral advice, or that I'm saying you're “supposed to” think this way, or that anyone expects you to just automatically do it, because it's hard, it takes will and mental effort, and if you're like me, some days you won't be able to do it, or you just flat-out won't want to. But most days, if you're aware enough to give yourself a choice, you can choose to look differently at this fat, dead-eyed, over-made-lady who just screamed at her little child in the checkout line — maybe she's not usually like this; maybe she's been up three straight nights holding the hand of her husband who's dying of bone cancer, or maybe this very lady is the low-wage clerk at the Motor Vehicles Dept. who just yesterday helped your spouse resolve a nightmarish red-tape problem through some small act of bureaucratic kindness. Of course, none of this is likely, but it's also not impossible — it just depends on what you want to consider. If you're automatically sure that you know what reality is and who and what is really important — if you want to operate on your default-setting — then you, like me, will not consider possibilities that aren't pointless and annoying. But if you've really learned how to think, how to pay attention, then you will know you have other options. It will actually be within your power to experience a crowded, loud, slow, consumer-hell-type situation as not only meaningful but sacred, on fire with the same force that lit the stars — compassion, love, the sub-surface unity of all things. Not that that mystical stuff's necessarily true: The only thing that's capital-T True is that you get to *decide* how you're going to try to see it. You get to consciously decide what has meaning and what doesn't. You get to decide what to worship...

Because here's something else that's true. In the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is *what* to worship. And an outstanding reason for choosing some sort of God or spiritual-type thing to worship — be it J.C. or Allah, be it Yahweh or the Wiccan mother-goddess or the Four Noble Truths or some infrangible set of ethical principles — is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and things — if they are where you tap real meaning in life — then you will never have enough. Never feel you have enough. It's the truth. Worship your own body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly, and when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally plant you. On one level, we all know this stuff already — it's been codified as myths, proverbs, clichés, bromides, epigrams, parables: the skeleton of every great story. The trick is keeping the truth up-front in daily consciousness. Worship power — you will feel weak and afraid, and you will need ever more power over others to keep the fear at bay. Worship your intellect, being seen as smart — you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out. And so on.

Look, the insidious thing about these forms of worship is not that they're evil or sinful; it is that they are *unconscious*. They are default-settings. They're the kind of worship you just gradually slip into, day after day, getting more and more selective about what you see and how you measure value without ever being fully aware that that's what you're doing. And the world will not discourage you from operating on your default-settings, because the world of men and money and power hums along quite nicely on the fuel of fear and contempt and frustration and craving and the worship of self. Our own present culture has harnessed these forces in ways that have yielded extraordinary wealth and comfort and personal freedom. The freedom to be lords of our own tiny skull-sized kingdoms, alone at the center of all creation. This kind of freedom has much to recommend it. But of course there are all different kinds of freedom, and the kind that is most precious you will not hear much talked about in the great outside world of winning and achieving and displaying. The really important kind of

freedom involves attention, and awareness, and discipline, and effort, and being able truly to care about other people and to sacrifice for them, over and over, in myriad petty little unsexy ways, every day. That is real freedom. The alternative is unconsciousness, the default-setting, the “rat race” — the constant gnawing sense of having had and lost some infinite thing.

I know that this stuff probably doesn't sound fun and breezy or grandly inspirational. What it is, so far as I can see, is the truth with a whole lot of rhetorical bullshit pared away. Obviously, you can think of it whatever you wish. But please don't dismiss it as some finger-wagging Dr. Laura sermon. None of this is about morality, or religion, or dogma, or big fancy questions of life after death. The capital-T Truth is about life *before* death. It is about making it to 30, or maybe 50, without wanting to shoot yourself in the head. It is about simple awareness — awareness of what is so real and essential, so hidden in plain sight all around us, that we have to keep reminding ourselves, over and over: “This is water, this is water.”

It is unimaginably hard to do this, to stay conscious and alive, day in and day out.

Paul Fussell's Definitions of Nine Social Classes:

Fussell's definition of *class*, generally: "By class, I mean all three [Weber's class, status and party], with perhaps extra emphasis on *status*."

Regarding class categories, generally: "of course no one person is located within one of these categories exclusively."

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Top Out-of-Sight Class: lives on inherited capital entirely...no one whose money comes solely from his own work can be a member of this class (29). The Top-Out-of-Sight class is essentially invisible to others in the social class system because they hide away from social class envy, revenge and expose journalism. This wasn't always so, but has largely been so since the depression. They also share many qualities with their opposite, the bottom-out-of-sight, namely: equally invisible; they do not earn their money; carry very little cash on their person (30-31).

Upper Class: (Page 31): differs from top-out-of-sights in two main ways: 1) inherits money, but also earns quite a bit, too. 2) is visible, often ostentatiously so. It's stigmata is that it is in the *social register*. Consider it rude to make compliments, as their homes and things are "without question" (32). Own horses (though this is not clear...the upper-middles do this, too). Impervious to ideas and a lack of interest in them...they are generally unoriginal (33).

Upper Middle Class: It may possess virtually as much as the two classes above it, the difference is that it has earned most of it in law, medicine, oil, shipping, real estate or even the more honorific kinds of trade like buying and selling works of art... The upper middles suffer from a bourgeois sense of shame, a conviction to live on the earnings of others, even forebears, is not quite nice (pg. 33). Chastity in sexual display. Most role-reversed in terms of gender roles: men think nothing of doing housework, women often work outside the home. Like to show off their educations. Being in the upper-middle class is a familiar and credible fantasy, thus it is the most desired class in America (34). "The goal is for everyone to look upper-middle class because upper-middle class equals Success" (34). Tend to have controlled, precise movements (35). It's all a game with the upper-middle class (36).

Middle Class: Values work and education, as well as money (16). "The middle class is distinguishable more by its earnestness and psychic insecurity than by its middle income" (39). Members are often insecure about their class, but tend to take pride in their work. The middle class offers social safety because they aren't associated with pride, snobbery or wastefulness like upper classes or with the shame and restrictions of the lower classes, but they are still scared of criticism (p26 and 39). The middle class is always anxious about offending (39). "They're also the people who do most of the moving long-distance (generally to very unstylish places), commanded every few years to pull up stakes by the corporations they're in bondage to" (40). "Virtually no latitude is permitted to individuality or the milder forms of eccentricity" (40). "The desire to belong, and to belong by some mechanical act like purchasing something, is another sign of the middle class" (41). "Being naturally innocent and well-disposed and aboveboard, a member of the middle class finds it hard to believe that all are not" (42).

The High Prole Class The difference between the lower middle class (which doesn't exist any more) and the High Prole class is a further lack of freedom and self-respect. They are the skilled workers and craftsmen who have pride in their professions and status, but fear the "reduction of status," (45). LeMasters calls them "Blue-Collar Aristocrats" (46).

Mid-Prole: “It’s down among the mid- and low proles that features some might find offensive begin to show themselves. These are people who feel bitter about their work, often because they are closely supervised and regulated and generally treated like wayward children” (47). A member of this class provides service for other individuals and is constantly supervised. Continues to perform tasks with the fear that one day they may lose their job, playing the role of a victim. Mid-proletarians are people who fall two class levels below middle class. They do not work at high paying jobs, but still engage in leisurely activities. These are people whose servitude is constantly emphasized but work in “operator” positions, such as a bus driver. Mid-proles often engage in private pursuits

Low-Prole: tightly supervised and controlled at work. “Occupational class depends very largely on doing work for which the consequences of error or failure distant or remote, or better, invisible, rather than immediately apparent to a supervisor and thus instantly humiliating to the performer” (48). “Constantly demeaned at work, the lower sorts of proles suffer from poor morale” (48). “There’s a prole tendency to express class disappointment by self-simplification” (48). Tend to retreat into private pursuits when not at work: hobbies, playing poker, watching and identifying with sports teams, camping, etc. “At the bottom of the working class, the low prole is identifiable by the gross uncertainty of his employment...social isolation is the norm here...” (49).

Destitute: “never have even seasonal work and who live wholly on welfare. They differ from the bottom-out-of-sights less because they’re more visible, in the form of Bowery bums, bag ladies, people who stand in public places lecturing and delivering harangues about their grievances, people who drink out of paper bags, people whose need for some recognition impels them to “act” in front of audiences in the street.” (49-50).

Bottom Out-of-Sight: “When delinquency and distress grow desperate, you sink into the bottom-out-of-sight class, staying all day in your welfare room or contriving to get taken into an institution, whether charitable or correctional doesn’t matter much” (50).

Karl Marx

Helpful Summaries and Context for *The Communist Manifesto*

Definitive quotes from Marx:

Communism (from the end of chapter two, which we didn't read, but an excerpt of which is provided as a postscript on this handout):

“When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organise itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class.

In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.”

Proletariat:

In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i.e., capital, is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working class, developed — a class of labourers, who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labour increases capital. These labourers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity, like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market (6).

Bourgeoisie:

181-developed definition: Controls the means of production and in doing so, demean the human character of the laborers. They are capitalists, the putting of capital and market gains ahead of all else. Creates a world after its own image. The empowered minority.

Marxists.org definition: The class of people in bourgeois society who own the social means of production as their Private Property, i.e., as capital.

Intellectual Context for Marx

Historical Materialism and the Break from idealism

In Marx you have a break from the idealism of Hegel, where history is thought of primarily as an unfolding of consciousness, into what Marx called “historical materialism,” where you have a material/economic substructure and the superstructure of culture/society/politics that rests in the substructure of the economy. In *The German Ideology* Marx lays out his critique fairly clearly:

“In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. We do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from *real, active men*, and on the basis of their *real* life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development...” (154)

“Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life.”
(p155)

Thus history is grounded in the material, which is woven through with human thought and ideals, rather than in the unfolding of ideals apart from or above the material world of real life. This provides a basis for the “means of production” argument in the *Manifesto*, as we must primarily involve ourselves in the material production of things rather than in the ideologies that derive from them.

Marx provides four premises of human history that lead to his critique of the modes of production:

- 1) **First Premise:** For there to be history, there have to be humans (*German Ideology* 149) and therefore humans must produce the means to satisfy their needs, or what Marx calls the “production of material life,” namely “Eating/Drinking/Habitation/Clothing...” The first historical act is thus the production of the *means to satisfy these needs*, aka...the “production of material life.”
- 2) **Second Premise:** The satisfaction of the first need leads to *new needs*. Without this, there’d be no history because things would be stagnant. This gives history an inherent dynamism.
- 3) **Third Premise:** Procreation. Humans must make other humans in order to make history.
- 4) **Fourth Premise:** Humans enter into social relations with each other. As we produce to fulfill new needs and as we procreate, we are engaged in *social relations*. In order to survive, we are engaged in both transforming nature, but also in creating social structures, new social arrangements, or what Marx will conceptualize as *modes of production!*

Postscript:

Helpful contextual excerpts from the end of chapter two of *The Communist Manifesto*

from <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch02.htm>

But let us have done with the bourgeois objections to Communism.

We have seen above, that the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class to win the battle of democracy.

The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degree, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, *i.e.*, of the proletariat organised as the ruling class; and to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible.

Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production; by means of measures, therefore, which appear economically insufficient and untenable, but which, in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionising the mode of production.

These measures will, of course, be different in different countries.

Nevertheless, in most advanced countries, the following will be pretty generally applicable.

1. Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.
2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.
3. Abolition of all rights of inheritance.
4. Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.
5. Centralisation of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly.
6. Centralisation of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State.
7. Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State; the bringing into cultivation of waste-lands, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan.
8. Equal liability of all to work. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.
9. Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of all the distinction between town and country by a more equitable distribution of the populace over the country.
10. Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of children's factory labour in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production, &c, &c.

When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organise itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class.

In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

Max Weber, “Class, Status, and Party”

Key Ideas, Context and Summary

Key Ideas in Weber

(Some glosses developed from <http://www.brooklynsoc.org/courses/43.1/weber.html>)

Social class, status and party exist in a complex relationship within the sphere of **power**.

Power is defined as: “the chance of a man or of a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action” (56).

In this way, **power** is not exclusively “economically conditioned,” but emerges through various social orders. “Man does not strive for power only in order to enrich himself economically....The striving for power is also conditioned by the social ‘honor’ it entails” (56). Weber conflates “social honor” and “prestige.”

Economic order and **social order** are not identical.

Economic Order is defined as: “the way in which economic goods and services are distributed and used”

Social order is defined as: “The way in which social honor is distributed in a community between typical groups participating in this distribution” (56).

Thus, “class,’ ‘status groups,’ and ‘parties’ are phenomena of the distribution of power within a community” (57).

Class is more closely tied to economic order (which has an intimate connections to status and party concerns). Concerned with “life chances” tied to economic interest and wealth.

Status is more closely tied to social honor/prestige order (which has an intimate connections to class and party concerns). Concerned with “life chances” tied to honor and prestige.

Party is more closely tied to the legal/political order (which has an intimate connections to class and status concerns). Purpose: struggle for domination. Concerned with “life chances” tied to the political realm.

The text, then, is largely an exploration of the variations of how these different social strata interact.

Key Concepts Outside of the Reading:

Besides **power** (see above), we get **Domination** and **Communal** and **Societal Action**.

Domination is the exercise of authority. Three ideal types of domination: charisma, tradition, and rational-legal.

Communal and Societal Action:

Communal Action, actions brought about on the basis of a shared belief of affiliation. A belief that members belong together and act together.

Societal Action, Actions brought about through a rational recognition of interests.

Life Chances: Opportunities to improve an individual’s quality of life which can come from their class, status or party.

Context and Summary of “Class, Status and Party”

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1. Introduction

Weber developed a different approach to the study of social groups and classes than did Marx. For Marx, there were two primary groups in society and these were classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, whose contradictory social relationship is the motive force for change in capitalism. Marx considers these classes to be defined and determined by whether they own the means of production (bourgeoisie) or whether they do not own the means of production and must sell labour power to those who do (proletariat).

In contrast, social groups and classes are in the sphere of power and how power is distributed. Given that there are various ways that power can be exercised, for Weber it is not possible to reduce the organization of all these groups to a single dimension or factor such as ownership or non-ownership of the means of production. Rather, for Weber there is a pluralism associated with class structure in that people attempt to achieve ends using various means – each of these may create a grouping such as a class, status group, or party. Social stratification has multiple and overlapping dimensions and groups that involve a complex set of social relationships.

The essay “Class, Status, and Party” is part of Chapter IX “Political Communities” in *Economy and Society*. Preceding this essay are discussions of political organizations, associations, and prestige, and the nation. Weber discusses these within the context of power and the distribution of political power in political communities. “Class, Status, and Party” was translated by Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, two United States sociologists who helped to develop a critical approach to American society and the dominant mid-twentieth century sociological approach. Page references in these notes are to the handout from *Economy and Society*.

2. Power

For Weber, what we would call social stratification, social class, or social inequality is in the sphere of power, and can be analyzed by examining economic situation, status honour, or parties (organizations formed by people to achieve certain ends). In a section of *Economy and Society* concerned with the distribution of power, Weber begins his analysis of class status and party. Weber’s definition of power is as follows (quote 14)

In general, we understand by ‘power’ the chance of a man or of a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the same action. (Weber, p. 926).

This is a very broad definition that could include political or economic power exercised at the level of community or society as a whole, or it could refer to smaller scale actions taken by groups in communities such as religious or peer groups, or even the exercise of power in institutions such as the family. The examples that Weber provides are usually quite specific though and he is concrete in his application of this definition.

While Weber did not ignore economic power, he does not consider it to be the only source of power, noting that power “may be valued for its own sake” (Weber, p. 926). He also notes that there is a complex relation between power and social honour, “While power may lead to social honour, “not all power ... entails social honour” (Weber, p. 926). Social status and honour is a key concept in this

essay, with Weber being concerned with social honour and its origins, and distribution. This refers to elements of respect or consideration given to and received and enjoyed by others.

Other complex relationships emerge from the relationship among the various structural orders of society – economic, legal, status orders (Weber, p. 927) – and others such as the religious, political, military which Weber does not mention here. In general, he considers such orders, and the structures associated with them, to be independent orders but also interlocked with each other. That is, each of these has a life of its own but interacts with and affects the other orders. In considering any social action, each of these orders may be key or may modify or condition developments emerging from other orders.

3. Classes

Weber's approach to class is broader in scope than that of Marx, in that it examines the many possible relationships of an individual or group to markets. At the same time, for Weber class as a social concept emerges in the economic order, based on relationships to markets. Among the possible classes that emerge are financiers, debtors, professional groups such as lawyers or doctors, or landowners. That is, for Weber, there are more possible classes than only capitalists and workers.

a. Class Situation

Weber begins his analysis by defining class situation as the relationship of a person or number of people to a particular market that has an important effect on the lives of these people. Weber notes

The typical chance for a supply of goods, external living conditions, and personal life experiences, in so far as this chance is determined by the amount and kind of power, or lack of such, to dispose of goods or skills for the sake of income in a given economic order. (This is excluded from the English edition of *Economy and Society*, but in Gerth and Mills, p. 181, it appears directly after the three items of part B, p. 927.

From this approach, Weber argues that there are three features of class situation. These are as follows.

i. Life Chances. “A number of people have in common a specific causal component of their life chances” (Weber, p. 927). That is, a group of people in a similar situation so that they have their life chances determined more or less in common, by some factor that strongly affects this. The ownership or non-ownership of property is one factor that affects life chances. For example, the wealth, income and property of two people may be similar, and this tends to imply a similar outcome to their actions. To each of the sets of causes is attached a probability of a set of possible outcomes, so that people with the same life chances may end up in different positions. The meaning each person attaches to these, and the manner these are used, may differ quite considerably. Weber notes how the power of those with property, compared to those without property, gives the former great advantages over the latter. But Weber does not restrict the definition to property in the means of production though, and notes that it could emerge in the area of distribution, for example in sales, where owners of different types of sales operations could form different classes – wholesale, retail, mining, forestry, etc. (Weber, p. 928)

ii. Economic Interest. “This component is represented exclusively by economic interests in the possession of goods and opportunities for income” (Weber, p. 927).

iii. Markets. This component “is represented under conditions of the commodity or labor markets” (Weber, p. 927).

Together, items ii. And iii. mean that class situation refers to a similar position with respect to the ownership of property or goods, or having (or lacking) opportunities to obtain specific types of income on the market (e.g. lawyers, entertainers). That is, those having similar economic interests with respect to particular markets are in a similar position. And note that these need not just be markets in labour or means of production, but could be an interest in any form of market, where that market has a strong effect on life chances. Examples of non-Marxian forms of class situations might be professionals (lawyers, doctors, accountants), technicians with different specialties (carpenters, computer programmers), entertainers, or professionals in sports. While individuals in each of these may have different backgrounds, in conducting their profession and selling their expertise, each has a common relationship to a market.

Slavery. Weber notes that slaves are not a class, presumably because they are not in a class situation with respect to a market. Slave owners treat slaves as their property, so that the slave owners could be a class, but slaves themselves are not in a position where they can sell anything in a market. Weber thus considers slaves to be a status group, that is, there is a negative form of social honour accorded to slaves, one that slaves become subject to.

b. Class

“The term ‘class’ refers to any group of people that is found in the same class situation” (again appears in Gerth and Mills, p. 181). Together these three aspects define the class situation, and those with a common class situation form a class. For example, for Weber the working class or proletariat is a social class, since it is a set of people, each with a common relationship to labour markets, and it is this connection that has a major impact on their life chances. The petty bourgeoisie is another class, since its members have in common the characteristic that they have ownership of means of production, but in such limited manner, that they must also exercise their own labour in order to survive and maintain this position in society.

While Weber considers classes to be important, especially for life chances, he argues that the common class situation does not necessarily, or even usually, form the basis for social action. He notes “In our terminology, ‘classes’ are not communities; they merely represent possible, and frequent, bases for communal action” (Weber, p. 927). With respect to the working class, Weber notes that

the direction in which the individual worker, for instance, is likely to pursue his interests may vary widely, according to whether he is constitutionally qualified for the task at hand to a high, to an average, or to a low degree. ... The rise of societal or even of communal action from a common class situation is by no means a universal phenomenon. (Weber, p. 929).

That is, “the concept of class-interest is an ambiguous one” (Weber, p. 928) and Weber regards the claim that “the class is infallible about its interests” as a “pseudo-scientific” operation (Weber, p. 930). At the same time, later in the essay he notes that rapid technological and economic changes “pushes the class situation into the foreground” (Weber, p. 938) and “Today the central issues is the determination of the price of labour” (Weber, p. 931). Weber argues that the latter may not be a demonstration of class struggle in that they do not indicate any attempt to change social structures but are merely disputes over distribution. But he also notes “today the class situation is by far the predominant factor” (Weber, p. 935) in formation of status groups. Thus Weber questions simplistic connections

between class situation, class, class consciousness, and class struggle, but recognizes that there is considerable identification of these in the society of his time.

Throughout this and other of his essays, note Weber's concentration on probability, chances, average, and variation. For example, he notes that class interest is ambiguous apart from implying "a certain probability from the class situation for a certain average of those people subjected to the class situation" (Weber, p. 929). He appears to argue that simple identification of class consciousness with class situation comes from a concentration on averages, without consideration of variation of interest, motives, or situation of those in similar economic and market position. Much of his analysis is devoted to explaining these variations, arguing that they produce a range of meanings for individuals and various forms of social action in such situations. He also emphasizes chances and probability, with the implication being that any common response is subject to various causes, so that a common social action may not be the result of a common situation.

c. Conditions for development of class interest

For those in contradictory property situations, Weber does not consider that the similar (objective) market situations to necessarily lead to the organization of a group on the basis of this similar situation. The sections "Social action flowing from class interests" and "Types of class struggles" (Weber, pp. 928-931, p. 305) indicate how class can be meaningful to individuals or collectivities in producing social action. This can be interpreted as showing that Weber did not really believe that Marxian classes, with full class consciousness, can develop. Alternatively, these arguments can be interpreted as forms that impede development of class consciousness, simultaneously pointing to conditions that have to be removed, changed, or created for such consciousness to emerge. Some of these arguments are as follows.

- The class or collectivity as a whole may have common (or average) interests, with a probability associated with this, but individuals within this class have a variation in interests. This could mean that individuals pursue perceived class situation in their own best interests, without considering the common interest of all those in this situation. If there is considerable competition among members of a class or significant chance for upward social mobility, these factors may dissipate class action or mean no serious class struggle.
- The presence or absence of institutional factors such as trade unions, or other class related organizations may affect the outcome. A strong trade union may be a means by which consciousness is affected, and the organizational abilities of the class are concentrated. However, Weber may consider this to be within the sphere of parties, rather than classes. (Weber, p. 929, 305)
- General cultural conditions affect social action – the intellectual development of the class, the "transparency of the connections between the causes and the consequences of the class situation" (Weber, p. 929). Weber notes that status groups obscure such connections.
- There may be similar reactions by many of those with a common class situation, but reactions may not be generalized, they may be amorphous, and may dissipate. Weber cites "grumbling" associated with disaffection, but notes the difficulty of this becoming a common and important social action. The grumbling of farmers, or students, or faculty, tends to be of this sort. That is, it is not generally strong enough to produce any significant action to change outcomes. (Weber, p. 928) Political parties may be a means

that alliances of proletarians with other collectivities oppose the bourgeoisie (Weber, pp. 931-2).

- There may be social action, but it may not be derived from members of a single social class. Rather, those with different class situations may together produce action – that is, there may be alliances across class that produce meaningful social action. Weber argues it “is not basically action among members of the identical class; it is action among members of different classes” (Weber, p. 930). For example, tax revolts or struggles over environment may be of this sort and, if so, there may be not clear cut relationship to class.
- The nature of struggles change at different times, so that to combine all these as expressions of a common history of class struggle is misleading. Early class struggles tended to concern debt bondage, later struggles concerned shortage of bread or other necessities of life, the “means of sustenance emerged” (Weber, p. 931). These were often slave or peasant revolts – protests against the withholding of goods from the market by the wealthy, in their attempt to increase prices. For Weber, these have nothing in common with modern capital-labour struggles. Even capital-labour struggles may be primarily concerned with the price of labour (wages) and can be restrained within a fairly limited and economic framework. That is, a struggle over wages could primarily be an attempt to protect lifestyle and status. If the concern is only with maintaining a standard of living, this struggle may restrain itself within limited boundaries, and not challenge property, or existing social relationships.
- Modern capital-labour struggles tend to be between the workers and the immediate bosses over the workers – managers, manufacturer, or business executive. The real difference of interest is that between workers and property owners, perhaps a rentier or shareholders. It is the shareholders or ultimate owners who obtain the greatest benefit from the economic situation. But in a bureaucratic enterprise and in complex markets, there are many layers, offices, and intermediaries between those with opposed interests. These mask the true nature of the dispute, making class struggle problematic. (Weber, p. 931, 305).

d. Types of Classes

Classes may be distinguished in several ways and since there are many markets, interests, and class situations, there are potentially a multiplicity of classes in any society. Weber develops the following classification for different possible types of classes.

i. Property or ownership classes. (Weber, p. 303). These are the positively privileged who own mines, cattle, slaves, capital goods, stocks, money, land and real estate, buildings, and in today's world new forms of property such as forests, water, technology (patents), communications (media sells audiences), franchises, and intellectual property. Capital becomes highly differentiated depending on how it is used in the market, and how the owner of capital employs it. One can lend money and merely collect interest or a return on this money (rentier), or the owner of capital can become actively involved as an entrepreneur. Weber does not consider capital as merely a technical aspect of production, but examines the meanings that owners of capital attach to its use. The consequences of each different type of use of capital can be quite different, in terms of societal effects.

ii. Commercial Classes. (Weber, p. 304). Among the possible forms taken by the commercial class are merchants, bankers and financiers, professionals, and industrial

and agricultural entrepreneurs. Where there were different classes of this sort, there could be struggles if there was some difference in economic interests, e.g. between debtors and creditors.

The positively privileged portions of this class have great wealth. At the opposite end of the spectrum are those who are negatively privileged – those without property. These are not necessarily an undifferentiated group. Just as there are several types of property ownership, there are also many ways in which individuals or groups may lack property. Debtors represent a class situation where net assets may be positive, but where the benefit of the asset is taken by others (farmers and small businesses). This is different than those with no property at all. Some of those without any property may be slaves (unfree), the poor, paupers, or homeless. These latter groups differ from proletarians, in that they have reached a condition where they are unable to sell even their labour power. Further, some with no property, may have something else which can improve their market situation, the acquisition classes. Even the proletarians of Marx must have something to sell – their labour power or their ability to work. The lumpenproletariat may lack even this.

iii. Acquisition Classes. These are individuals with no (or very little) tangible, marketable property but with skills or abilities which can be offered on the market. They are likely to receive a return over and above that received by those who have only labour power to offer on the market. There are many different types of marketable skills, both in terms of specific type, and the value of this type. Specialists, or those with unusual or rare talents, such as entertainers or sports professionals, may be able to be well situated with respect to some market. Those who are able to exercise a monopoly over their skills by keeping others from acquiring these skills (monopoly or some closure to the group) are well situated. Those with higher levels of education, qualifications, and credentials may be similarly well situated.

iv. Major Classes. While there could be such a pluralism of classes that it would be difficult to analyze class structure, Weber notes that at a particular time and place there were a number of major classes that are most important. In “Status Groups and Classes” (Weber, pp. 302-307), Weber identifies the major social classes as

- the working class as a whole, the more so the more automated the work process becomes
- the petty bourgeoisie
- the propertyless intelligentsia and specialists (technicians, various kinds of white-collar employees, civil servants – possible with considerable social differences depending on the cost of their training)
- the classes privileged through property and education.

For the latter two groups, Weber notes that members of the propertyless intelligentsia may have a chance to move become members of the classes privileged through property or education, and Weber notes that “money increasingly buys *everything*.” (Weber, p. 305).

Weber’s methodology could be applied to Saskatchewan or Canada today. With some additions and modifications, the major classes might be farmers, petty bourgeoisie, lower level white collar (clerical and sales), industrial working class and trades, upper level white collar and professional, and propertied. The latter differs in this province from that of large centres with very wealthy capitalists having greater

amounts of control over capital and the economy. There are also different sections of the propertied – real estate, industrial, financial, oil, or mining. See the analysis of the class structure of the United States developed by Erik Olin Wright and that of Canada by Wallace Clement.

4. Status and Status Groups

a. Groups

Sociologists since Weber have distinguished groups from aggregates or collectivities. An aggregate of individuals may have a common class situation, they may be considered a class, but this class may not be a group. This collectivity could even have a common set of values, ideas and norms, but do not interact in a sustained or patterned fashion.

A group carries with it the notion of interaction among group members. Two examples of sociological definitions of groups are as follows. “Social groups are collectivities of individuals who interact and form social relationships. ... They have their own norms of conduct and are solidaristic. Within this category may be included the family, groups of friends and many work groups.” (Theodorson, pp. 97-98). Groups could be considered (i) to have an ongoing and independent reality, with individuals coming and going but the group remaining active, (ii) to have an effect on the attitude of members, and vice versa, socializing new members, and (iii) there will be some difference of opinion among group members. (Burkey, pp. 9-12). The group may be a community, and it may cut across classes, or at least across class situations.

Weber notes the possibility that classes may form groups, but considers this to be unlikely. The common class situation does not usually lead to social action on the basis of the common class situation. In order for such social action to take place, there have to be proper cultural and intellectual conditions, and the nature of the contradictory market situation would have to be relatively transparent to all. These struggles are likely to be most clearly expressed when other aspects, such as status differences, are removed. Weber argues that there is class conscious organization where (i) there are no groups between the real adversaries, (ii) large numbers of persons are in the same class situation, (iii) it is technically easy to organize those in the common class situation, and (iv) where the goals of the class are well understood, and this understanding is led by those outside the class (intelligentsia). Note how different this is from Marx's view of class. For Marx, class involved not only a common market situation or position (and one restricted primarily to the capital-labour relation), but also the recognition of this common position by members of the class, the ability to act as a class, and the opposition of the class to the interests of another class. Marx's expectation was that this class consciousness would develop. Weber is skeptical about consciousness developing in a class.

b. Definition

Weber argues that groups are more likely to be formed on the basis of status or status honour than from class situation or class.

In contrast to classes, *status groups* are normally groups. They are, however, often of an amorphous kind. In contrast to the purely economically determined ‘class situation’ we wish to designate as *status situation* every typical component of the life of men that is determined by a specific, positive or negative, social estimation of *honor*. This honor may be connected with any quality shared by a plurality, and, of course, it can be knit to a class situation: class distinctions are linked in the most varied ways with status distinctions. (Weber, p. 932).

Honour refers to any distinction, respect, or esteem that is given or accorded to an individual by others. Such social recognition may be a formal process (titles, awards) or it may be in ordinary informal forms of social interaction whereby we respect or disrespect others (forms of greeting, inclusion or exclusion in a formal or informal group, relations associated with friendships). Social honour is expressed in social relationships, in how we interact with each other. Social esteem may be either positive or negative, so that an individual may be given a high level of social esteem or honour, or at the other ending, a low level of such esteem – the latter may be associated with prejudice, discrimination, or separation. Status groups are thus associated with positive, neutral, or negative aspects of honour – those favoured and those less favoured or excluded.

Weber describes this well in the essay on ethnic groups, noting that such distinctions concern one's conception of what is correct and proper and, above all, of what affects the individual's sense of honor and dignity. All those things we shall find later as objects of specific differences between status groups. The conviction of the excellence of one's own customs and the inferiority of alien ones, a conviction which sustains the sense of ethnic honor, is actually quite analogous to the sense of honour of distinctive status groups. (Weber, p. 391).

For Weber, social honour is social in nature, in that it does not automatically result from a market or property relationship in the economic sphere, but is an expression of a social relationship. It can be associated with any quality that is socially valued (positive) or is not desirable (negative). We accord each other honour on all sorts of characteristics, and where these affect some component of life, then this can be considered to be an element of status honour. For example, we may accord status and recognition for outstanding achievements (scholarships and student awards), or respect for abilities and accomplishments of others. It may be negative where someone does not live up to ordinary standards, where behaviour is socially disapproved (associated with ethnicity, outcast groups, those who do not properly adhere to particular religious rituals or accepted practices).

Status honour is linked to social evaluations, whereas class is related to the economic or market situation. Weber considers status honour to be a more important basis for people forming themselves into groups or communities. Or communities may be formed, and this community and its mode of behaviour and norms become the basis for status honour in this community. In the essay on ethnic groups, for example, Weber notes that different customs may be caused “by the diverse economic and political conditions of various social groups” (Weber, p. 392), by geographic separation, or “political action can give rise to the belief in blood relationship” (Weber, p. 393). The resulting forms of status honour may appear to be more subjective (social esteem) than objective (common market situation), but may be just as effective in maintaining status groups and leading to social or political action. In terms of groups formed by economic factors, the distinction that status groups may have from classes is that they are more likely to emerge from a difference in forms or levels of income and consumption (standards and levels of living associated with particular status) as opposed to production and relationships to the means of production (position within this is the basis for class).

c. Forms of status groups

A status group could be formed on the basis of any characteristic that is socially recognized by others, and which becomes the object of social honour. For example, social honour could recognize ethnic or religious characteristics, male-female characteristics, or lifestyle characteristics such as bikers, musical tastes, or association with sports. There is a

multiplicity of status groups, with Weber identifying three major types of social honour that can form the basis for power and affect life chances of individuals and groups. The status situations and groups that interest Weber are those in the sphere of power, where life chances are related to the status groups. Peer groups or groups based on musical tastes or lifestyles factors may be important in terms of status honour, but are not really status groups in that they have much effect on life chances.

i. Property is an important basis for a status group, especially where markets prevail. Those with considerable property or wealth have the means to develop a certain style of life, and those without property are not able to exercise this style. Because of this, or on the basis of property alone, social honour may also be accorded these same people. (Weber, p. 932).

Hadden notes that status “may get in the way of communal action on a class basis” (p. 148). Markets concern gains and losses through exchange and, in their workings, are not associated with honour, although most of us expect certain standards of conduct and behaviour to be adopted by those engaging in market exchange. But if markets were allowed to operate fully, this would destroy status differences and only market considerations would influence life chances. While property can form an important basis for status, property alone is not the key to status, and status “normally stands in sharp opposition to the pretensions of sheer property” (Weber, p. 932). Those who acquire property may not be accorded the same status privileges are those who originally held property. One example of this is the distinction between established society and the nouveau riche. Status groups may hinder “the free development of the market” (Weber, p. 937) and some types of market activities. Alternatively, market privileges may be extended only to those with the proper status levels (old boys network). Weber notes various forms of status privilege – wearing special costumes, carrying arms, extending economic privileges to group members, and intermarriage (Weber, p. 935). In this connection, Weber makes an interesting comment that privileged status groups disdain “common physical labour,” some forms of rational and entrepreneurial work, and artistic and creative activity (Weber, p. 936).

ii. Styles of life emerging from differences of income, forms of consumption, place of residence, or fashion can, and frequently do, lead to Weberian status groups. While property and income are the source of funds required for consumption, it is not so much the source of the income that forms the status group, but rather the set of objects and services consumed which leads to the social honour associated with group interaction. Groups may form around residential neighbourhoods, professions, and educational levels (community associations, professional associations, restrictions based on educational qualifications). (Weber, pp. 932-3).

iii. Groups unrelated to property could also be formed. These could be ethnic groups (see the essay on ethnic groups), religious groups, groups around sexual orientation, and the various urban communities and groups which form around common sets of interests. In each, some form of social recognition and honour is accorded to members, there is likely to be some closure of the group (some are included and others are excluded), and membership may carry with it certain duties and privileges. Some of these groups may have effect on life chances, especially where religion or ethnicity is an important feature of social organization.

These considerations might be developed into a model of gender status and status groups, with male status denied to females, and also the reverse. Some types of male status privilege extend across property or income lines, denying women the same forms of status recognition and honour, and thus excluding women from male groups. Similarly, women may form status groups around motherhood, parenting, and the family, whereby males are excluded. Since males in modern society have generally had more access to jobs and income, this can become a basis for economic, social, and political inequality between men and women. Forms of honour associated with male status may even be denied to those women who have property or have acquired a prominent or high income position. In other cases, such status differences may lead to legal differences – eg. the inability of women in some place in the nineteenth century to become property owners or pass on property to their children. While Weber develops guidelines for analyzing status differences by ethnicity or race, he did not generally develop such an analysis for issues of sex and gender relationships. Such an analysis of sex or gender stratification comes from recent feminist writers.

d. Features of Status Groups

Weber notes how status groups can cut across property lines, so that “propertied and propertyless people can belong to the same status group, and frequently they do with very tangible consequences” (Weber, p. 932). Weber notes that this is more common in America than in Europe, given the more democratic and open social relationships, and the greater degree of social mobility, that have existed in North America as compared with Europe and other regions.

Such cross-class status groups are especially common in the case with ethnic groups, where social honour is accorded those who are considered to have the same ancestry, customs, language, or religion. Those without these characteristics are generally excluded, since they cannot be accorded the same status honour. In some ethnic groups there may even be disrespect or dishonour associated with those who do not have the same ancestry or other defining characteristics. These are generally closed groups, in that membership is not generally open to members except for those with the set of characteristics that are recognized by the group. It may be possible to leave the group but difficult to enter. Religion is also a common basis for such cross-class status groups, although some draw primarily from a particular class situation or ethnic group. In contrast to ethnicity, such religious groupings are much more open in that anyone can join, by adopting the precepts of the religious group. In fact, some religious groups make recruiting of new members a major aspect of their organization or even of status honour (eg. missionaries of Latter Day Saints).

Honour or dishonour can form the basis for awarding jobs, opportunities for promotion, and privileges in the political sphere. Characteristics of this type that affect life chances may be more meaningful to people than is relationship to markets (class situation), so that social status is the basis on which groups are formed. Another example is where groupings of men create “old boy networks” that control hiring, promotion, and rewards within institutions. When these men act together as a group, they exercise control over life chances to almost the same degree, or even more so, than does the rationality of labour markets. Since honour and dishonour are socially formed, those who are members of a status group associate meaning with the characteristics honoured. While this may be income and a particular style of life, it is not so much the relationship of the individual to the means of production as the meaning associated with the income and style of life. In this sense, relationship to the market and class situation may be an underlying factor, but it is the status honour or dishonour associated with lifestyle which Weber regards as more crucial to group formation and social action.

Status groups are usually associated with some restrictions on social intercourse or interaction with others. There is extensive interaction within the group, whereby meaning associated with social honour and dishonour is expressed among members of the group. That is, there is some degree of closure to outsiders, and the status group exercises some degree of management of relationships of those within the group. While there may be relationships with those outside the status group, these may be primarily market or political relations, whereby the normal forms of status honour are not offered or extended to these outsiders. For example, Hutterites have high degree of closure, extensive regulation of status honour and group social interaction, but also relate to those outside the group in economic matters.

In ethnic or religious groups, such as the Hutterites, marriage may be endogamous within the group. Those who are members are likely to belong to a circle or community. Various religious groups may operate in this manner, with fairly close guidelines concerning who members are permitted to associate with, and with whom members are allowed to marry. Such forms are more common in groups formed by tradition (religious and ethnic), with most contemporary status groups being more open. In contemporary society, with great geographic and social mobility, it may be difficult to maintain this closed nature. In contrast, where there is little social or geographic mobility, Weber notes that social status groups may solidify into castes.

5. Parties

Parties are organizations, rather than communities or groups, and they involve striving for a goal in a planned manner. They are associations of people that attempt to influence social action. Since they are concerned with achieving some goal, they are in the sphere of power in that. In Weber's words,

Whereas the genuine place of classes is within the economic order, the place of status groups is within the social order, that is, within the sphere of the distribution of honor. From within these spheres, classes and status groups influence one another and they influence the legal order and are in turn influenced by it. "*Parties*" reside in the sphere of power. Their action is oriented toward the acquisition of social power, that is to say, toward influencing social action no matter what its content may be. (Weber, p. 938).

That is, classes are in the economic order, status groups in the social order, and parties in the sphere of power. In some senses, power is not a separate order, in that classes and status groups are concerned with power. The difference between parties on the one hand, and status groups and class on the other, is in the level of analysis. Parties are organizations, whereas classes and status groups are groupings of people. If status groups or classes become well organized, they may form parties, or their parties may become the organizational wing of the class or status group. Trade unions, professional associations, ethnic organizations, and religious institutions are examples.

Parties also differ from classes or status groups in that they "always involve association" (Weber, p. 938), not only social interaction. That is, they attempt to achieve specific and well understood goals in a planned or rational manner. The party has causes, aims, goals, or purposes that it aims to achieve. It considers various possible ways of achieving these, and selects a course of action that it considers the most likely to achieve that goal. The structure of the party is also rational in that these actions are not a byproduct of social interaction, but are carefully considered and selected. The party is likely to have a constitution, a set of officers, and means of filling these positions with people most suited for them.

Parties may be political parties, or they may be other organizations aimed at achieving other goals. As such, they can cut across both status and class lines, expressing interests that may be common to those from many different sectors of society. Examples could be groups organized around helping to

solve the problems of specific diseases (Cancer Society, Arthritis Society), groups such as the Wildlife society, or even sporting and recreation organizations. Some may have political ends, others may merely attempt to pursue a particular aim of those in the organization. Adams and Sydie note that parties are likely to be mixes of class or status group interests, “they are more likely to be mixed types” (p. 187).

For political parties to gain political power, they must attempt to represent a fairly broad range of interests. Putting together a political program involves identifying issues which are key, and other issues which will pull in various groups. Some parties, such as the British Labour Party, may primarily represent a specific class. Other parties, such as the Canadian Liberal Party or the Saskatchewan NDP attempt to put together programs which appeal to a wide variety of interests.

It might also be noted that these parties may acquire a life of their own and pursue ends that are not part of their original purposes. Weber noted how social action can have unintended consequences which may be no part of the original intentions of the class, status group, or party. The most famous example is the Protestant ethic, which was established for purely religious or spiritual reasons. Weber argued that the establishment and power of this ethic had the unintended consequences of assisting the development of capitalism. Particular political parties are established with certain ends in mind, but as organizations, especially ones with some power, become subject to a variety of social influences which may change their purposes. Some long-time NDP supporters claim that the NDP has become more interested in maintaining power than in pursuing principles of social democracy. Parties tend to be a feature of modern societies, where power is exercised in a more formal, rational, and planned manner than in traditional societies. They do not operate in traditional societies, where personal relations or patronage may dominate. Parties are means of organization to achieve specific ends in modern society and, once organizations are developed as parties, they become more rational, that is systematic and permanent.

6. Ethnic groups

a. Definition of ethnic group

Human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists. (p. 389)
Differs from kinship group by being presumed.

b. Race or ethnic identity

- Common inherited or inheritable traits (p. 385)
- Common descent (p. 385)
- Intermarriage (pp. 385-6)
- Biological heredity (p. 387)
- tradition (p. 387)
- Differences of custom (p. 387) – honour and dignity
- Habits of life (p. 387)
- Physical types (p. 388)
- Language, ancestry, religion (p. 390)
- Blood disaffinity (p. 392)
- Symbols (p. 396)
- Stories (p. 396)

c. Perception or subjective component

- Perceived – group only when race perceived as common trait and this requires joint (political action). (p. 385)
- Antipathy related to inherited traits or visible differences (p. 385)
- Abhorrence of intermarriage socially determined (p. 386)
- Belief (p. 387)
- Memory (p. 388) of migration
- Childhood reminiscences (p. 388)
- Attachment to homeland (p. 388)
- Belief in group affinity (p. 389)
- Presumed identity (p. 389)
- Feelings, sentiments (p. 390, 393)
- Symbols (p. 396)
- Awareness (p. 392)
- Imitation (p. 392)
- Idea of blood disaffinity (p. 392)

d. Social action

- Joint (political) action (p. 385)
- Antagonism against others (p. 385)
- Usually negative – despised or venerated (p. 385)
- Need for political support (p. 388)
- Belief in group affinity can help form political community (p. 388)
- Social action may not be concrete, unlike kinship group (p. 389)
- Facilitates group formation (p. 389)
- Common action

e. Sources

- Historically accidental habits (p. 387)
- Imitation (p. 388)
- Migration (p. 388)
- Politics inspires belief in common ethnicity (p. 389)

f. History

- [source] forgotten (p. 387)
- Differential instability of type and custom (p. 388)

g. Effects

- Monopolization of social power creates abhorrence of intermarriage (p. 386)
- Favourable chances of survival and reproduction for certain hereditary qualities (p. 388)
- Monopolistic closure (p. 388)
- Sentiments of likeness (p. 390)
- Beliefs limits social circles (p. 390)
- Chosen people (p. 391)

h. Interconnections

- May live in sharply segregated proximity (p. 388)
- With class (p. 392), diverse economic and political conditions

i. Note

- Conditions for determining ethnically based social action (bottom of p. 394)
- Ethnicity as a concept vanishes if concepts carefully defined (p. 395)
- French Canadians (p. 397)

7. Conclusion

Weber's discussion of class, status and party give an idea of how markets affect people, and how people form themselves into groups, partly as a result of markets and partly on the basis of other factors that are socially important. To some extent, Weber's status groups would appear to be ways in which people in capitalism protect themselves from the effects of markets, but at the same time using the market as they can, and using the means of power they have at their disposal.

In spite of the myriad factors that must be taken into consideration when looking at these social structures and institutions, Weber concludes that there are relatively few dominant features of social structure. In terms of classes, the major classes are the working class, the capitalist class, and the middle professional group. For Weber there are also a number of major status groups and parties, not necessarily identical to or determined by the same factors as are classes. That is, one may consider some of the major styles of life as those of upper class, middle class, and lower class. Within this system of stratification, the working class does not fit, although the working class has been and continues to be an important social class in capitalism. Finally, people in societies create some major parties, political parties and other organizations, each aiming to achieve some end. Again, it is likely that only a few of these organizations will acquire major importance for people at any one time.

Weber's writings can thus be used as a guide, but one should not get lost in the mass of details to be considered. Rather, one must attempt to reconstruct the major groups and classes in society, determine how people related to these, and how these interact.

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