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Growing up in the fourth poorest county in Europe, I was quick to learn my class position. This included a process of socialization in which I was taught, among other things, how to dress, walk, talk, eat, which sports to take up, and where to hang out. Most importantly though I was told who the out-groups were, people I later came to identify as the middle and upper classes.

I remember the resentment that would build up in me as I walked past middle-class homes in which the people inside actually owned the properties they lived in.

My friends and I would taunt the middle-class tourists who visited our area during the summer as they would flaunt their first-hand cars, summer homes, and spoilt children. Building identities of resistance, in the way Paul Willis (1977) identified in his famous studies of working class children, perfectly reflected our lives.

It was therefore a jarring experience to arrive at my first year in University surrounded by students whose parents held professional jobs, were paying for their children's tuition, and displayed a whole range of mannerisms and discourses that I had learnt to resent from a young age. Within the first week these class tensions arose when some of the students living in my apartment pressed me into buying new "respectable" clothes that included collared shirts and smart shoes. My exposure and transition into being a middle-class academic had begun.

Taking lectures on the processes of class stratification enlightened me to how this deeply engrained class mentality had come to shape my formative years. It was this eye-opening experience that led me to wish to understand these processes in more depth and to become an academic who examines the relationships between the conditions of neoliberal capitalism and the societies in which they are embedded. While I further my transition into middle-class status through the profession I now undertake, my childhood experiences continue to highlight to me the need to challenge all forms of social inequality. I hope that my research can help make a difference in this area by continuing to understand these processes and to help reshape our world into a more equitable place for all.

References

Willis, P. (1977). *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. London: Saxon House.