

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND CONSPICIOUS CONSUMPTION

Social Stratification and Conspicuous Consumption
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In today's society it has become increasingly easy to distinguish people who are part of the upper and lower class. In a day we may walk past someone who is homeless but also interact with someone who is a millionaire. Below are some examples of individuals who fit each class and reasoning as to why they are part of that specific group.

If you live in the Northeast, the probability of you hearing Tom Brady's name is extremely high. Not only is he a star quarterback for the New England Patriots but he is also the only player in the history of the National Football League to have won six Super Bowl Championships. Because of his immense success on and off the field Tom Brady can be categorized into the lower upper class. To begin, the lower upper class can be defined as, "those with "new money," or money made from investments, business ventures, and so forth." In addition, the lower upper class accounts for only 5% of the world's population.

In 2018 Tom Brady was estimated to have a net worth of around 230 million dollars. He has been on multiple magazine covers and is currently an endorser for brands like Under Armour, Aston Martin, Intel, and Tag Heur. Going from the brands alone, we can see that the audience is of at least upper middle class. Recently, Tom Brady and supermodel wife Gisele Bundchen have listed their most recent home in Massachusetts for \$39.5 million. Additionally, they were also the owners of a \$20-million-dollar custom built mansion in Los Angeles. When it comes to lifestyle choices Brady has been seen at events such as the Kentucky Derby, Brazil's famed Carnival, and the 2014 World Cup. In 2017 he and his wife were also a co-sponsors of the Met Gala. Something interesting I learned is that he follows a specific diet that costs a whopping \$16,000. I would assume the majority of the price is due to the personal chef.

An example for the upper middle class would be my parents or more specifically my Dad. He is a doctor and professor at NYU who specializes in behavioral medicine and behavior. As of right now I do not know the exact number but I do know that he makes more than \$75,000 annually. Currently the upper middle class accounts for around 14% of the world's population. When looking at spending habits we currently live in one of the safest towns in

Connecticut which also has a nationally ranked high school. We have also gone on summer vacations annually to Cape Cod. Most importantly though is the fact that I am able to attend Quinnipiac University. While many of my peers have had to take out loans, my parents are able to pay for my education without taking such actions. Because of this we have decided to save substantially more money and have been doing so since the end of my junior year of high school. My parents are not flashy people whatsoever as we have a modest home, two Subaru's, and do not own any designer or luxury brands. However, for my birthday and other important milestones I have been extremely fortunate to have received name brand and other luxury items.

The working class currently accounts for 30%-35% of the world's population. Such jobs often require reduced skill and education and is often physical. One such job that would fit within this class would be a janitor. To begin, these individuals lack many of the freedoms and choices that can be found in the classes about it. They have hardly any time for themselves and are limited to a number of "off and sick days" the employer has provided. The work is often physical, dirty, dangerous, and off putting. In most cases a janitor would live in a small to medium sized house. They simply could not afford extra space or other amenities found in more expensive homes. Growing up I had a friend whose Dad was a janitor. His clothes were not name brand and often times the family would buy from stores such as Kohl's and Target.

Unfortunately, the lower class accounts for around 20% of the world's population. Jobs within this class may or may not require a high school diploma and are often poorly paid and offer little to no benefits for the worker. One such example of this is the grocery store clerk. There is a reason why teenagers fill these positions during the summer and that is because it is temporary for them but they are also to make some cash before they return to school. Adults who fill these jobs are often older, disabled, or simply cannot find any other place to work. As seen before the jobs requires very little skill and relies heavily on the person's physical ability whether it be scanning items at checkout or restocking shelves. It is also fairly common that the person has to take mass transport or obtain a ride from a friend in order to get to and from

work. This can also create another issue because that person is unavailable to drive them and they then have to miss or be late for work. Typically, workers often consume foods that tend to be on the unhealthy side because they cannot afford the healthier food options that are also more expensive.