

Deviance and Stratification of the Underprivileged

Racial profiling is a practice implemented by police forces (whether or not they will admit it), mothers, and fathers, grandmothers, etc. Racial profiling is the degree of anxiety or suspicious aroused from a person view of another primarily based on a person race or style of dress. Why does society do this? Surely, watching the news reported on another crime in a poor area, or by a minority (race) does not deter society from this practice. Deviance among the underprivileged (minorities and poor) is correlated to the degree of denied life chance and cultural capital, and adversely to the amount of cultural capital afforded to the particular underprivileged individual.

Kendall describes deviance as, “any behavior, belief, or condition that violates significant social norms in the society or group in which it occurs.” (Kendall, 174) A young underprivileged male is acting out in school, his actions are typically considered deviant. Crime is considered a form or manifestation of deviance. A person can act in deviant ways because it is a way to rebel (long hair in the sixties) or to innovate (lunchroom sit-ins in the sixties), but in this case of crime or acting up in school it is more likely to be a reaction to limitation or strain felt by underprivileged segment of the population. The underprivileged are not afforded the life chances that the wealthy and privileged are afforded, partly because are of a lower class standing than the middle and upper classes. Weber’s life chances follow three factors that are associated with the “ideal type” of social class: wealth, prestige and power. Obviously, the underprivileged are not going to be wealthy, they do not enjoy the comfort and ease of being able to live comfortable. True, they could acquire wealth through illegitimate means, like selling

drugs; however, the danger from law enforcement and violence associated with drugs would hardly be called a comfortable wealth. Thus, things like a good education and healthcare are denied. The respect or regard with which a person or status position is regarded by others or prestige (Kendall, 253), is also unattainable for a person of limited means, especially in this capitalist society where monetary worth is often associated with personally worth. One life chance not wholly denied to the underprivileged is power. Power is the ability of people or groups to achieve their goals despite opposition from others (Kendall, 253). Any person has the ability to empower him or herself. However, the advent of cultural capital is now relevant when the topic of power is concerned.

Cultural Capital is the social assets that include values, beliefs, attitudes, and competencies in language and culture (Bourdieu, 382). These assets empower people, and form individuals who are more likely going to be able to succeed. People who lack these assets are more likely to not fit-in with society. The underprivileged are more likely to lack cultural capital, which the middle and upper classes are more likely to possess. These cultural capital assets are more in tune with the dominate or prestigious class, therefore the upper classes would easily assimilate in school systems and society. Some kids who lack these assets would display some deviant behavior and be treated accordingly. They would be labeled deviant and could be possible moved to a school to deal with deviant students. The underprivileged schools are typically inadequate schools and teach them poorly, not preparing them for college, which is a means to acquire wealth, prestige and power.

On the contrary, if an underprivileged individual is allotted a good education and cultural capital he/she is less likely to commit deviant behavior. He/she has bought into

the system. He/she is complacent, comfortable with their standing in society, and thus less likely to behave in a deviant manner.