



Social Class Exploration (adapted from photocopied article, written by a group of women living in Sonoma County, from working and middle class backgrounds)

Students are instructed as follows: Growing up in a class society, we've all learned attitudes about others and ourselves that help perpetuate the class system. These questions will aid you in becoming aware of the oppressions and/or privileges you've experienced because of your background and how they affect your life now. Awareness is the first step in making a commitment to change.

Money and Work:

Who earned money in your family? How much? Did the income change?
What were the attitudes about spending? saving? loaning/borrowing? accepting welfare?
Did you feel you had enough? more or less than your friends?
What kind of job did the money earners in the family have? How much control did they have at work?
Who owned the work place?
What were your family's/friends'/society's view of the status of that work?

Home:

What kind of neighborhood did you live in?
Did you own your home?
Did you move a lot? If so, why?
Who lived at home? grandparents? older/married children?
Who cleaned your home?
How were feelings, especially anger, expressed?

Education:

How much "formal" education did your parents have?
What were the expectations for your education?
Are you the first generation in your family to attend college?
What do you believe is the most important reason for a college education?

Health:

Did you get regular physical checkups?
When you were ill, were you taken to a doctor? a hospital? a clinic?
Did you go for regular dental exams and cleaning? Were your teeth filled?
Did you have braces?
How was smoking treated in your family?
How was alcohol use treated?
Was regular exercise considered important?
What about participation in sports?
What were the attitudes about food, eating in your family? What types of meals, snacks, drinks, desserts were common?

Now?:

How would you describe your class background and current class status?

How do you feel about your class background and status? (angry, ashamed, guilty...)

Did your parents tell you that you were from a specific class?

How do your attitudes about your work and money compare with those of your parents?

Do you see yourself as upwardly or downwardly mobile?

In groups, how do you see your power? How do you feel about, react to the power of others?

How do you relate to people in school or at work who are in a different class?

If you get in a financial jam, can your parents help you out financially?

What are some examples of oppressions and/or privileges you experience now that relate to your class background?