

local news

▼ POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

High cost of university misleading

When you read about who goes to college and university and who doesn't, you often hear how hard it is for poor people to get a post-secondary education.

Often you assume this is because they don't have enough money to pay for tuition and books.

Yet there are a lot of middle class kids who don't have money for tuition and books either, but they manage to enroll.

There are many theories that try to explain this phenomena.

The most interesting one I came across refers to a concept called "cultural capital."

This idea suggests that the socio-economic culture that a person is exposed to at an early age will not only determine whether they attend college or university, but will also affect the school they decide to enroll in.

For example, theorists hold that students from high socio-economic classes (especially in the United States where most of this research is completed), will opt for Ivy League schools with high price tags because this is part of their culture.

Their home and community environments shape this choice process.

Their parents most likely went to the same type of school and they probably attend a private preparatory school which is connected to



School's In

a number of Ivy League universities.

Whether they realize it or not, they are expected to graduate from the right school to meet family and societal expectations.

Even though they have the economic capital to at-

tend any school they want, it is their culture that will drive their college choice process.

The flip side of this is that someone from a middle or lower middle class family may see themselves as not entitled to the same type of education.

This even occurs in Canada where our post-secondary education system consists of mainly public colleges and universities, and where tuition fees are about the same across the country.

Although I don't have Canadian statistics to substantiate the correlation between socio-economic culture and college choice, I suspect that many rich Canadian families send their children to Ivy League schools in the United States. I also suspect that families with high incomes can afford to send their children to any university in the country regardless of where that school is located.

For example, I have a friend whose father was an English professor at Simon Fraser University and his mother was a doctor, and he went to Queens University in Kingston Ontario for all his degrees (he has a PhD) because the expectation of his family was that you went back east for your university education.

To him this was what he was expected to do regardless of being able to complete that same credential in B.C.

It is the middle- to low-

income students who really have to consider their options and will likely study closer to home because they can't afford to go anywhere else.

According to college choice theories, they don't see themselves as entitled to more than that.

Their economic capital as well as their culture will influence that college choice process where they are expected to enroll in a program or school that is affordable and gets them back into the workforce as quickly as possible.

The sad part of all of this is that some students from low-income families may not see themselves entitled to a post-secondary education at all.

They may come from a culture that demands they enter the workforce as quickly as possible to help support the family.

What this all boils down to is the college choice process is quite complicated.

It doesn't always come down to high grades in high school.

It may come down to fitting into the right college or university environment depending on your socio-economic background.

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