

Interview 1: Bradley

Bradley and I met in kindergarten when we ran into each other headfirst whilst playing tag. For almost sixteen years now we have been inseparable. Bradley was born and raised in the city. He attended a private elementary school, a private middle school, a private high school, and now attends a private college in the North. Much like I, he has been shaped by the city. He knows the best late night diners, the worst neighborhoods to be in, and the key maneuverings necessary to survive in a fairly intense and merciless upbringing. I knew he would be the most reliable source to ask questions about being raised in New York, so I spoke with him over Thanksgiving Break to see how he felt being a city kid affected him as an adult individual.

Nikita: Being born and raised in the city, how do you think being a true-blooded city-kid affected your attitude as an adult?

Bradley: I think I fit into a lot of the stereotypes that come with being a New York City kid. I'm Jewish, snobby, relatively wealthy, self-entitled, and sometimes arrogant. I mean, I'm also a really nice kid, I'm loyal, a good friend and trustworthy. But I also have those bad traits that come out sometimes. They're there definitely because of the city.

N: Do you think people not familiar with your upbringing attribute the bad attitude to your innate personality or the environment which shaped it?

B: I think most people, especially now in college, realize that I am more than just a "New York attitude". But still, when I meet new people and tell them I'm from New York City, Manhattan, East Side, they always ask if my life is similar to "Gossip Girl". I always said no, that show is nothing like real life. But recently, having left the city and taking a step back I realize that our lives, the social situations and academic pursuits were really "Gossip Girl"-esque. I mean obviously that show was an exaggeration of real life, but it was really accurate on some points. I mean the cattiness and shallowness are definitely there. Everyone is arrogant and has a superiority complex. Everyone suffers from anxiety and goes to therapy at least once a week. There are dozens of JAPs [Jewish American Prince/Princess]. I think that it's a phase that we eventually grow out of. You've seen some of our friends since we've been back and they seem to have really become mature adults. But the years of crappy competitive behavior leave a greater impression than the eventual kindness.

N: Do you think your attitude would have been different if you had been raised in the suburbs or in a rural area?

B: I don't know. Probably. Then again I know plenty of kids who grew up in rural Long Island, or New Jersey, or Westchester, and they're often worse than the city kids. With the city kids I've noticed that there is a certain civility or caution to the bitchiness. With the kids in the suburbs its much more "in your face". They're really not afraid to be nasty and be nasty right in front of you, just to be mean. I don't think I would have been like that though. I'm naturally a nice kid, and don't really feel the need to hurt anyone, especially emotionally. I guess I would have just

been a bit more hostile and unfriendly rather than confrontational. And if I were raised in a rural neighborhood I don't really know what I would be like to be honest. I don't really know that many kids from rural areas. I tend to avoid them, they always seem boring and far away. I just never saw any reason to go to farm country, and haven't many people from it.

N: Certain studies published in the American Journal of Psychiatry talk about different psychological developments of city kids versus non-urban kids and compare the ease with which each group navigates social situations and makes friends. How do you think you compare to a kid not from a city when it comes down to making friends and being comfortable in social situations? Do you tend to make friends with city kids or non-city kids?

B: I think I do pretty well in social situations. I'm comfortable walking into most parties or rooms and making friends and having a good time. I think that's because in the city when we would go out we would often go to some random person's house which would be filled with a hundred kids not from our high school and we were forced to stay and make the best of the situation because there was nowhere else to go. I also have no problem getting a little too loud and making a fool of myself. I think the fact that the city offered so many opportunities to party and experiment in social settings that I learned what works and what doesn't work. I learned how to make just enough noise to be seen but not to become notorious. I learned how to drink just the right amount, how to play the right party games, and how to talk to random drunken strangers.

N: What about the people that you surround yourself with in college?

B: To be honest I mostly make friends with other kids from the city or the immediate surroundings. They're the ones that understand my behavior and background the most, and they're the ones I feel most comfortable around because they're the type of people I'm used to always being around. Like I said, I know and am friendly with plenty of suburban kids but to be honest I can't comprehend what growing up in a suburb must be like. I have no way of connecting with these people on a level that I can reach with city kids. And I already told you about rural kids. I feel so different from them that I don't even bother to reach out. I know that's a bad attitude to have but I don't know...I guess that's the way I am.

N: I guess so. Well, thank you for answering my questions.

B: No problem.