

Social stratification

theory, measurement & inequality





What does this mean?

What is the best way to measure it?



American "Socio-economic status"

Based on dominant American school of sociology: Structural-Functionalism:

- Social inequality is "functional" for societies.
- In order for a society to function, the "most able" people need to do the most responsible jobs.
- Find 'most able' people through the education system.
- Motivate them by conferring high status and income.
- "Natural" individual inequality (based on ability) is the reason for inequalities of income and status.
- Education and income tend to be used as proxy measures for 'SES'.



From a life course perspective, exit from education is a potential 'critical period' or pivot point/transition which sets people onto trajectories that may influence health & biology:

- working conditions,
- income and material circumstances,
- family and social relationships,
- locus of control and health behaviours.
- Education should be analysed separately from other aspects of social stratification.
- Income captures material/economic pathways, sometimes measured as wealth in older age groups.









- Mel Bartley: Social position = social class & status/prestige.
- Measures of inequality and social stratification in the UK have largely focused on social class.
- What is it & how is it different from social status?



Social class according to Marx

- Owners of land (who live on rent)
- Owners of capital (who live on profit)
- Owners of labour power (who live on wages)
- Landowners need tenants to pay rent
- Capital owners need workers to produce things they can sell at a profit
- Workers (owners of labour power) need owners of capital to employ them

UCL

Environmentalism Vs. Eugenicists

Environmentalists

- Public health (John Snow) & engineers (Edwin Chadwick) etc concerned about urban poverty & infectious disease mortality. Led to Sanitary Movement
- Towns & cities got cleaner.
 Infectious disease mortality fell, infant survival rose
- But urban poor still had poor health & high mortality

Eugenicists

- Francis Galton applied statistics to inheritance of intelligence.
- Said sanitary reform had a paradoxical result -- more "unfit" infants survived to reproduce and grow the number of "genetically unfit" adults among the urban poor.
- Eugenics' social hierarchy was based on intelligence rather than ownership



Social structure according to Galton and the Eugenics Movement





Britain first official measure of social class, 1913. THC. Stephenson's Social Classes

I 'Upper & middle'

III Skilled worksmen

IV

V Unskilled worksmen



Registrar-General's Social Class

- I Professionals
- **II** Managers
- **IIIN Non manual**
- **IIIM Skilled manual**
- IV Semi skilled manual
- V Unskilled manual

Only a single class till 1981



Developing a more scientific measure of social class: National Statistics Socio-Economic Classes (NS-SEC)

- 1990s recognised need for a clearer measure of social position for use in UK Official Statistics
- NS-SEC is based on employment relations and conditions
- Which jobs have more security, better career prospects, more power and autonomy? (based on Weber's concept of "Life Chances")
- Occupations with better conditions in these respects will tend to increase the general "life chances" of incumbents.



NS-SEC: Criteria

- Paid salary or hourly
- Wage increments
- Job security
- Chances of promotion
- Decide when to start and leave work
- Influence over planning of own work
- Influence over planning other people's work



National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC)

1 Higher managerial and professional occupations, including employers in large firms, higher managers, professionals whether they are employees or self-employed

2 Lower managerial and professional occupations and higher technical occupations

3 Intermediate occupations (clerical, administrative, sales workers with no involvement in general planning or supervision but high levels of job security, some career prospects and some autonomy over their own work schedule)

4 Small employers and self-employed workers

5 Lower technical occupations (with little responsibility for planning own work), lower supervisory occupations (with supervisory responsibility but no overall planning role and less autonomy over own work schedule)

6 Semi-routine occupations (moderate levels of job security; little career prospects; no pay increments; some degree of autonomy over their own work)

7 Routine occupations (low job security; no career prospects; closely supervised routine work)



Social position = social class & social status

Max Weber:

- Social class life chances based on acquisition within the market place (underpins SEC measure).
- Social status: "every component of life fate that is determined by a positive or negative **social estimation** of honour". Characterised by consumption, lifestyle and habits of taste. (from *Economy and Society* 1922)

Weber's four characteristics of status groups

- 1. Evaluate social worth and bestow honour
- 2. Segregate themselves from other status groups
- 3. Uphold patterns of consumption and canons of taste
- 4. Monopolise status privileges





Pierre Bourdieu:

Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste (1979, 1984 in English) pierre bourdieu

la distinction

critique sociale du jugement



Cultural capital as non-economic assets promoting social mobility. Consumption of cultural capital reinforces distinction and social distance between status groups.



Status can be acquired through variety of ascribed or acquired attributes, including occupational class, as well as wealth/income, education, gender, age, behaviour, personality characteristics, whatever a particular society or community values.

There are other, potentially intersecting, dimensions of inequality, eg. ethnicity, gender.

These inequalities partly driven by unequal access to educational and economic resources, but also status/discrimination.



What is ethnicity?

Some definitions:

- A social construct influencing both personal identity and group relations, specific to place, time, and context (Ford & Harawa 2010).
- A complex and fluid concept referring to the group someone belongs to, based on shared characteristics such as ancestral or geographical origins, cultural traditions, and language (Bhopal 2013).
- A social, rather than biological construct (Flanagin et al. 2021).
- Some emphasise the distinction between ethnicity as *risk factor* vs *risk marker* (Kaplan & Bennett 2003).



Occupational class by ethnic group UK 2011 Census data

Managerial/Admin/Prof Intermediate Semi-routine/routine Never worked/unemployed Full-time students INDIAN 33.1 23.5 20.9 9.3 13.2 WHITE 31.2 30.6 26.7 4.8 6.7 **BLACK CARIBBEAN** 26.7 26.4 27.5 9.4 10.0 MIXED 26.2 22.2 21.2 10.0 20.6 **BLACK AFRICAN** 24.5 16.8 21.8 13.5 23.4 PAKISTANI 16.5 23.0 19.8 24.4 16.3 22.8 BANGLADESHI 13.8 19.4 25.3 18.7



Women's confinement to the home and exclusion from employment



Source: McMunn et al. 2014 ¹⁹

UCL

Gender inequality in labour market outcomes remain

Figure 1: The employment rate for all people increased by 0.6 percentage points on the year to a record high of 76.5%

UK employment rates (aged 16 to 64 years), seasonally adjusted, between January to March 1971 and October to December 2019



- 74% of part-time employees are Women (ONS Labour Force Survey 2019)
- Women earn 43% less than men; full-time gender pay gap is 8.9% (ONS Labour Force Survey 2019).
- 69% of low paid* earners are Women (Women's Budget Group, 2020)
- 34% of MPs are women (Fawcett Society, 2020)
- 29% of FTSE 100 directors are Women (Fawcett Society, 2020)
- And over-representation in precarious and low paid sectors (Women's Budget Group, 2020)

*Below two-thirds of hourly median income.

Source: Office for National Statistics - Labour Force Survey

"Unpaid care work is the missing link in explaining gender gaps in labour market outcomes" (OECD 2014)



Unpaid Care Work: The missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labour outcomes

OECD Development Centre, December 2014



By Gaëlle Ferrant, Luca Maria Pesando and Keiko Nowacka

April 2020: Women's Budget Group Commission for a Gender-Equal Economy recognised unpaid care work as being at the heart of gender inequalities.



Parenthood continues to reset gender relations within households









Biology as a potential mechanism for linking social conditions with health.





Embodiment: A growing area of research

Neuro-endocrine, immune & metabolic systems:

- ➢ interrelated,
- influenced by stress
- linked with chronic illness.

Metabolic risk

- Waist circumference
- Systolic & diastolic blood
 pressure
- HDL cholesterol
- Triglycerides
- Glycated haemoglobin

Inflammation

- C-Reactive Protein
- Fibrinogen

Neuroendocrine

Cortisol



Income & education inequalities in inflammation in UKHLS



Source: Davillas, Benzeval & Kumari 2017 Nature



Inflammatory markers, social and psychological processes; lifecourse perspective

		Men			Women		
C-reactive protein Social class So (mg/liter) at birth		Social class at 23 years	Social class at 42	Social class at birth	Social class at 23 years	Social class at 42 years	
Social class 1	0.89 (2.77)	0.91 (2.68)	0.99 (2.68)	0.95 (2.85)	1.06 (3.18)	1.11 (3.15)	
Social class 2	0.96 (2.53)	1.00 (2.69)	1.11 (2.72)	1.09 (3.09)	1.14 (2.97)	1.15 (2.91)	
Social class 3	1.12 (2.65)	1.15 (2.64)	1.14 (2.60)	1.26 (3.12)	1.52 (3.06)	1.36 (2.97)	
Social class 4	1.16 (2.65)	1.23 (2.61)	1.17 (2.94)	1.26 (2.94)	1.35 (3.00)	1.33 (3.06)	
p for trend	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	0.005	

•Social class 1, professional and managerial; social class 2, nonmanual; social class 3, manual; social class 4, unskilled.

Geometric mean values are presented. Numbers in parentheses, standard deviation.

Source: Tabassum, Kumari et al. 2008 AJE



Beta coefficients for the association between membership of each cultural engagement class (compared with the Disengaged class) and fibrinogen and CRP, effect sizes that reach the p<0.05 threshold are underlined. UKHLS (Walker, Soc-B PhD thesis)

<u>OUTCOME</u> <u>GROUP</u>	<u>OUTCOME</u>	<u>LATENT</u> CLASS	MODEL:							
		(DISENGAGED AS REFERENCE)	UNADJ.	DEMO.	OTHE R	CAPAC TIY	SEP	SOCIA L C.	ECON. C.	ALL COVA RS
INFLAMMATORY MARKERS	FIBRIN.	OMNIVORE	<u>-0.42</u>	<u>-0.26</u>	<u>-0.25</u>	<u>-0.22</u>	<u>-0.17</u>	<u>-0.16</u>	<u>-0.15</u>	<u>-0.15</u>
		SPORTS	<u>-0.43</u>	<u>-0.22</u>	<u>-0.21</u>	<u>-0.18</u>	<u>-0.14</u>	<u>-0.13</u>	<u>-0.12</u>	<u>-0.11</u>
		RECREATION AL	<u>-0.25</u>	<u>-0.14</u>	<u>-0.13</u>	<u>-0.10</u>	<u>-0.08</u>	<u>-0.07</u>	<u>-0.07</u>	<u>-0.06</u>
		LOW	-0.04	<u>-0.07</u>	<u>-0.07</u>	<u>-0.05</u>	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01	-0.01
		INST & HIST	<u>-0.25</u>	<u>-0.21</u>	<u>-0.20</u>	<u>-0.17</u>	<u>-0.13</u>	<u>-0.12</u>	<u>-0.11</u>	<u>-0.10</u>
	CRP	OMNIVORE	<u>-2.41</u>	<u>-2.02</u>	<u>-1.99</u>	<u>-1.72</u>	<u>-1.35</u>	<u>-1.35</u>	<u>-0.15</u>	<u>-1.21</u>
		SPORTS	<u>-2.73</u>	<u>-2.21</u>	<u>-2.17</u>	<u>-1.84</u>	<u>-1.55</u>	<u>-1.57</u>	<u>-0.12</u>	<u>-1.37</u>
		RECREATION AL	<u>-1.69</u>	<u>-1.41</u>	<u>-1.39</u>	<u>-1.10</u>	<u>-0.91</u>	<u>-0.92</u>	<u>-0.07</u>	<u>-0.82</u>
		LOW	<u>-0.81</u>	<u>-0.90</u>	<u>-0.87</u>	<u>-0.70</u>	-0.52	-0.52	-0.01	-0.42
		INST & HIST	<u>-1.92</u>	<u>-1.83</u>	<u>-1.79</u>	<u>-1.49</u>	<u>-1.17</u>	<u>-1.17</u>	<u>-0.11</u>	<u>-0.98</u>

1958 COHORT: Association between work-family life courses (16-42yrs) & INFLAMMATION (fibrinogen 44yrs). (N = 6,481)



'Fully adjusted' models include gender, childhood social class, childhood health and behavioural difficulties, educational Source: attainment, occupational class of head of household, smoking, physical activity, problem drinking, BMI. Lacey et al. IJE 2015

1958 COHORT: Association between work-family life courses (16-42 yrs) & METABOLIC MARKER – HDL cholesterol age 44 yrs. (N = 6,597)



McMunn et al. JECH 2015



Take home

Importance of considering the range of social and economic dimensions of inequality carefully in any research that you do.

What role do social status, social bias, discrimination across identities, employment relations and conditions (and social participation), material circumstances (income, wealth and physical environment) play? How will you take account of them?