

Social stratification

Knowledge Organiser



Social Stratification Knowledge Organiser

Social class is seen as the main source of stratification in Britain. Based on economic factors such as occupations and income. **Social mobility** is deemed to be possible.

Other forms of social stratification:

- **Feudalism:** ascribed, little to no chance of moving to the next strata.
- **The caste system in India:** ascribed, closed and little movement
- **Apartheid:** ascribed, little social mobility



Distribution of wealth and income

Wealth refers to assets such as houses, land, art, jewellery. Income refers to wages, benefits etc. Wealth is usually distributed more unevenly than income.

Ascribed status: social position is fixed at birth and unchanged over time.

Achieved status: social position is earned on merit e.g. education, promotion.

Social Stratification:

Describes the way society is structured in a hierarchy, shaped like a pyramid. Each layer is smaller but more powerful than the one below it.

Social inequality:

Refers to the uneven distribution of resources such as money & power, life chances or opportunities related to education, employment and health.

Karl Marx and social class (1818-1883)

- The bourgeoisie (the ruling class)- owned the means of production.
- The proletariat (working class) forced to sell their labour. Experience **alienation** and lack of control.
- The bourgeoisie exploit the proletariat.
- **Ruling- class ideology** and **false class consciousness**.

Life chances:

Peoples chances of achieving positive or negative outcomes as they progress through life. These are not distributed equally between groups. Affected by factors such as: **religion, social class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, age, disability**

Social mobility: moving between social classes.

Intra-generational social mobility: movement of their lifetime e.g. promotion.

Inter-generational social mobility: movement between generations of a family e.g. when a child enters a different social from their parents.

The culture of poverty:

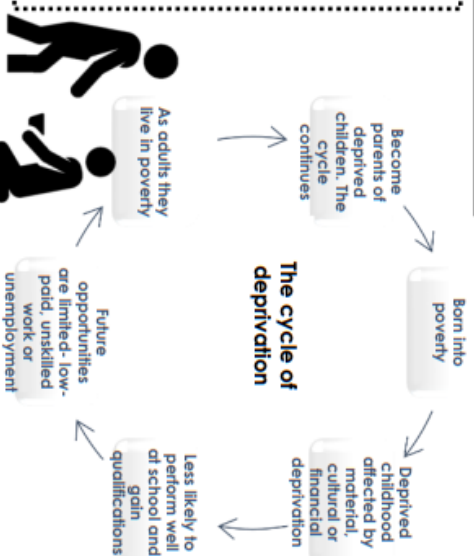
People from the poorest section of society are socialised within the subculture of poverty. As a result they are unable to break free from poverty.

The cycle of deprivation:

The policy to remove poverty involves employing social workers and using local authority provision to help break children out of the cycle of deprivation.

Material deprivation:

Having insufficient money to be able to afford goods and services. As a result people may not have a balance diet. Poverty may lead to ill health during childhood and inadequate housing.



The cycle of deprivation

Embourgeoisement thesis
Working-class families are becoming middle-class. Their norms and values are changing as their standards of living and income improves. Affluence has led to privatised lifestyles centred on the home and family- based on consumerism.

Keythinkers

Davis & Moore (1945) (Functionalist)	Max Weber (1864-1920) (Marxist)	Fiona Devine (1992)	Charles Murray (1996)	Peter Townsend (1979)
Social stratification was a 'universal necessity' for every society. The system must match the most able people with the functionally most important positions in society. These high rewards would encourage ambitious people to compete for them, with the most talented achieving success.	Classes are formed in market places, such as the labour market. One class hire, the other sells their labour. A class is a group of people with similar life chances- being successful. Weber stressed the importance of status (prestige) and power in determining life chances and shaping patterns of stratification e.g. members of aristocracy may have no savings, but have a title that gives them status.	Devine tested Lockwood's idea that 'privatized instrumentalism' would become typical amongst the working class. This term refers to social relationships centred on the home with work only to an end, when affluent workers joined with their workmates. Paid work is a means to a comfortable lifestyle rather than having job satisfaction.	Society had a growing underclass. Government policies have encouraged the members of this underclass to become dependent on benefits. Traditional values such as honesty, family life and hard work were being undermined by the members of the underclass, to be replaced by an alternative value system that tolerated crime and various forms of anti-social behaviour.	Identified three ways of defining poverty: The state's standard of poverty on which official statistics are based. The relative income standard of poverty based on identifying those households whose income falls below the average for similar households. Relative deprivation, when families are unable to participate in activities and have the living conditions that are widely available in society

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Sex & Gender

Sex: Male or female (biology)

Gender: masculine or feminine.

Gender & power:

Feminists see gender inequality as the most important source of division in society. Society is mainly controlled by men who have considerable power within politics and the workplace.

The crisis of masculinity:

Men are currently experiencing this because of the underachievement of boys in school, the decline of paid work in manufacturing, women's increased participation in paid employment.

Inequalities:

- Gender dominated occupations e.g. fire-fighting, nursery worker.
- Glass ceiling for women- invisible barriers for promotion.
- Gender pay gap.
- Women's triple shift.
- Childcare provision- barrier preventing women from returning to work.



Age

Chronological, biological or a social category. When does 'youth' begin and end?

Childhood & Power

Families are agency of social control so they are expected to authorise discipline of their children. Parents exercise power when they try to influence their child's behaviour against their will.

Young People & Power

Authority from teachers over students based on their status in the school setting. Some students do not conform to this authority however. See Paul Willis.

Inequalities:

- Ageism- age discrimination. Younger or older people tend to be victim of this.
- Negative stereotyping
- Older people living in poverty.



Poverty

Absolute Poverty:

Income is insufficient to have the minimum to survive. No access to the basic necessities in life e.g. shelter, food, clean water, heating & clothes.

Relative Poverty:

Cannot afford the general standard of living of most people in their society. Income is much less than the average for that society.

Gender & Poverty:

- Women have longer life expectancy so more female pensioners living alone.
- Women more likely to head lone-parent families.
- Usually have a low income.
- Gender pay gap
- Women are more likely to be in part-time income than men.

Ethnicity & Poverty:

- Lower income families
- Generally disadvantaged in employment, pay and quality of job.

Child Poverty: More likely to live in poverty if:

- Household has four or more children.
- Where the head of the house is a lone parent or from an ethnic minority
- With no paid workers.



Ethnicity

A social group that share an identity based on their cultural traditions, religion or language

Ethnicity & Power:

Under-represented in political power/decision makers. Also under-represented in teaching, armed forces, police officers, particularly at high levels of the organisation. Although 40% of highest positions in the NHS are from ethnic minority groups

Inequalities:

- Unemployment
- Discrimination in the labour market
- Minority groups have become an underclass (see Charles Murray)
- Racism is built into the workings of capitalism.

The welfare state: (a system in which the state takes responsibility for protecting the health and welfare of it's citizens and for meeting their social needs.)

- **The National Health Service (NHS):**

Funded by central government from national taxation. Provided GPs, hospitals, opticians and dentists.

Welfare Benefits:

- **National Insurance Benefits:** If you have paid into the system (National Insurance Contributions) you are entitled to Jobseekers Allowance and the state retirement pension.
- **Income Support and Child Tax Credit**
- **Local Benefits** could include free school meals, educational subsidies, housing benefits.



	Poverty	Power
Functionalists	Focus on the positive functions of poverty for some groups e.g. knowing you could live in poverty means people will undertake undesirable jobs, creates jobs for groups who deal with the poor. The poor also reinforce mainstream norms and provide examples of deviance such as lazy and dishonest.	Government and politics serves a purpose to regulate main stream norms and values.
Marxists	Poverty is the result from class-based inequalities. It is inevitable that some people will be poor in a capitalist society. Poverty serves the interests of the bourgeoisie who can hire and fire people e.g. if they demanded higher wages, the bourgeoisie could threaten to higher from the unemployed.	Weber- power is based on coercion or authority. The main sources of authority are traditional, rational legal and charismatic authority. Marxists argue the bourgeoisie use their power to exploit the proletariat. They have economic and political power.
Feminists	Women face the greatest risk of poverty than men, lone-mothers and the older women living alone in particular. The gender pay gap and the inequality of the division of caring responsibilities contribute to this.	Patriarchy- the system of our social structures and practices are male dominated and they use this power to oppress and exploit women.
New Right	Focus on individuals behaviour rather than structural causes of poverty. Stress the importance of traditional values and self-reliance. Welfare dependency and the underclass are key ideas in this approach.	The government does not meet it's peoples needs, and they believe their should be minimal government intervention from the welfare state.

Social stratification – Key words

What is social stratification?

Achieved status	Social status gained by an individual as a result of educational qualifications and/or success in their career.
Aristocracy	An elite social group with inherited titles.
Ascribed status	Social standing given to an individual on the basis of inheritance.
Class	A type of social stratification based on economic factors.
Elite	A minority group who have power and influence over the other members of society.
Estate	A type of social stratification based on the ownership of land and feudal duties.
Gentry	A group of landowners with social standing below the aristocracy.
Hierarchy	The organisation of society into a rank order of importance.
Monarchy	A political system that has hereditary heads of state.
Slavery	A system in which individuals can become the property of another.
Social inequality	Differences between the members of society in terms of wealth, class, status and power.

Socio-economic class

Economic inequality	Differences in income and wealth.
Trade union	An organisation of workers designed to protect their common interests through negotiation and collective action.
Urban	Towns and cities; sociologists often refer to social groups such as the urban working class.

Marx on class

Alienation	Individuals who feel that they have become separated from the wider society are said to be alienated, e.g. they lack power and control over their lives.
Class conflict	The conflicting interests of socio-economic classes.
Marxism	Ideas based on an interpretation of the ideas of Karl Marx.
Petty bourgeoisie	Owners of small businesses.
Polarisation of social classes	Increasing differences between the lives of different socio-economic classes.

Totalitarianism	Government by dictator or one party state.
Weber on class	
Life chances	The opportunities that an individual has to share in the cultural and material rewards that a society has to offer, e.g. access to education and employment.
Lifestyle	The various ways in which social groups choose to use the resources that are available to them, reflecting the attitudes and priorities of the group.
Market situation	Weber believed that socio-economic classes developed in market economies in which individuals compete for economic gain; those who achieve a similar share of available resources (e.g. access to education, ownership of housing and other forms of property) occupy a similar market situation.
Life chances: education	
Ageism	The negative stereotyping and unfair treatment of individuals because of their age.
Hate crime	Crime based on prejudice towards another because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or because they are transgender.
Homophobia	Attitudes and behaviours based on negative stereotypes of homosexual people.
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.
Racism	Attitudes and behaviours (unfair treatment and discrimination) based on negative stereotypes of a particular ethnic group.
Sexism	Attitudes and behaviours (unfair treatment and discrimination) based on negative stereotypes of a particular gender.
Life chances: health	
Average life expectancy	The average age to which an individual can expect to live. In Britain, male life expectancy was 79.1 years in 2012-2014; female life expectancy was 82.8 years.
Chronic illness	A long-lasting disease.
Germ theory	The discovery that some diseases are caused by micro-organisms.
Obesity	A body weight that places the individual at risk of disease, e.g. diabetes.
Social construct	Patterns of behaviour based on the norms and expectations of a society.
The affluent worker	
Class identity	This is the social class with which an individual identifies.

Embourgeoisement	The adoption of middle-class values and behaviours by prosperous members of the working class.
Instrumentalism	Describes the attitude of some working-class people towards their jobs and any form of collective action, e.g. work as simply a way of earning money and self-interest rather than traditional working-class collective values.
New working class	Home-centred members of the working class with instrumental attitudes (first described in the 1960s).
Social mobility	
Automation	Computer-controlled production process.
Inheritance tax	Taxation payable upon a person's death.
Intergenerational social mobility	Movement between generations.
Intra-generational social mobility	Movement within a generation.
Private education	Fee paying schools.
Unpaid internships	Unpaid work shadowing and work experience.
Vertical social mobility	Movement up or down the socio-economic scale.
Poverty	
Poverty line	A measure of minimum income required to meet the essential cost of living.
Poverty trap	Poor families in receipt of means tested welfare benefits become 'trapped' in poverty if their earnings marginally increase, resulting in the loss of benefits and, as a consequence, no improvement in their economic situation.
Relative deprivation	
Industrial democracy	Involving employees in the management of an industry.
The underclass	
Eugenics	A belief in the possibility of improving the qualities of the human species by selection.
Lumpenproletariat	The lowest level of the working class in nineteenth century society.
New Right	Economic and political ideas closely associated with the governments of Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in America; key features included support for free market economics, a reduced welfare state and a weakening of social democracy and trade unions.
Political science	A branch of social science concerned with systems of government.

Globalisation	
Deindustrialisation	Social and economic change resulting from the loss of manufacturing industry.
Private sector	Part of the economy that is neither owned nor controlled by the government and that exists to create profits for shareholders.
Protectionism	Protecting national industries from foreign competition.
Public sector	Part of the economy that is owned or controlled by government.
The welfare state	
Beveridge Report	A report on future welfare provision to the wartime coalition government.
Centre-left (social democrats)	The political beliefs generally associated with the British Liberal Party and past Labour governments.
Right-wing	The political beliefs of the majority of the British Conservative Party and other right of centre politicians.
Welfare state	Government systems for supporting the health and general well-being of the population. In Britain, this term is often used to describe post-1945 welfare reforms including the introduction of the National Health Service in 1948.
Weber on power	
Charismatic authority	A type of authority based on the unusual personal gifts of a particular leader.
Hereditary peer	An inherited aristocratic title, e.g. duke or duchess.
Legislation	Refers to the various laws that govern behaviour in society.
Prime minister	The head of the British government.
Rational authority	Rules and procedures that are generally believed to be fair and impartial.
Traditional authority	A form of power based on established customs and inherited status.

Political power (1)	
Constitution	A nation state's essential laws governing the rights of citizens.
Convention	Something that is usually done.
Democracy	A political system that allows individual citizens to elect their representatives to parliament, used more generally to describe the right of citizens to participate in political debate.
Dictatorship	A political system where power is concentrated in the hands of a single individual or small group.

Nation state	An independent geographically located state, whose citizens recognise a common nationalistic identity.
Referendum	A national vote on a single issue.
Political power (2)	
Coalition	Partnership in government between two or more political parties.
Partisan alignment	Voting out of party loyalty.
Partisan dealignment	Voting out of self-interest.
Proportional representation	A term that describes various systems that allocate seats in parliament based on a proportion of the votes cast.
Turnout	The number of people who vote as a proportion of those entitled to vote.
Voter apathy	Voters who show no interest in the outcome of an election.
Power relationships	
Interest (or pressure) groups	Formally organised groups created to represent the interests of a section of society.
Power relationships	The ability of one group in society to control or influence another.
Patriarchy	
Cultural institutions	Organisations that promote or preserve a particular culture, e.g. the media and the education system.
FTSE 100	The <i>Financial Times</i> Stock Exchange Index (top 100, top 250 companies, and so on).
Home secretary	Senior government minister in charge of the Home Office.
Stock exchange	A market in company shares (stocks).

Social Stratification example exam questions

Shorter mark questions: DESCRIBE

Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'social stratification' (3 marks)

Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'life chances' (3 marks)

Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'gender' (3 marks)

Describe what is meant by 'age discrimination' (3 marks)

Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'absolute poverty' (3 marks)

Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'relative poverty' (3 marks)

Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'relative deprivation' (3 marks)

Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'material deprivation' (3 marks)

Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'poverty trap' (3 marks)

Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'rational legal authority' (3 marks)

Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'democracy' (3 marks)

Shorter mark questions: Identify & DESCRIBE / EXPLAIN

Identify and **describe** one problem that sociologists might encounter when investigating social mobility (3 marks)

Identify and **explain** one way in which governments have tried to reduce age discrimination in Britain over the last 15 years (3 marks)

Identify and **describe** one way in which having a high income may improve life chances (3 marks)

Identify and **explain** one difference between individual and structural explanations of poverty (3 marks)

Identify and **explain** what sociologists mean by functionally important roles (4 marks)

Identify and **explain** one advantage of using unstructured interviews when investigating attitudes and values of powerful groups in British society (4 marks)

Identify and **explain** what Weber meant by the term 'social class' (4 marks)

Identify one way of measuring social class and **explain** why this measure might be used (4 marks)

Identify and **explain** one disadvantage of using overt observation when investigating people's attitudes, lifestyle and aspirations (4 marks)

Identify and **explain** one reason why the importance of class may have declined over the last 50 years (4 marks)

Identify one way in which men have more power than women in society and **explain** why this situation continues today (4 marks)

Identify and **explain** one reason for the gender pay gap (4 marks)

Identify and **explain** one way in which British governments have tried to reduce social inequalities based on ethnicity over the last 40 years (4 marks)

Identify and explain one advantage of using group interviews to study minority ethnic groups' experiences of unemployment (4 marks)

Identify and explain one reason why people from some minority ethnic groups might experience unemployment (4 marks)

Identify and explain one way in which expectations surrounding childhood have changed in recent years (4 marks)

Identify and explain one factor that might affect young people's life chances (4 marks)

Identify and explain one reason why young people have more power over their lives today than 50 years ago (4 marks)

Identify and explain one factor that might limit the opportunities of people with disabilities to find secure employment (4 marks)

Identify and explain one disadvantage of using content analysis to investigate the way the media portray asylum seekers and refugees (4 marks)

Identify and explain one difference between wealth and income (4 marks)

Identify one way in which sociologists might measure poverty and explain one disadvantage of using this measure (4 marks)

Identify and explain one reason why women are more likely than men to experience poverty in the UK (4 marks)

Identify and explain one reason why a government might use means-tested benefits (4 marks)

Identify and explain one disadvantages of using social surveys to investigate people's experiences of poverty (4 marks)

Social stratification 12 markers: Discuss questions

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that children who are born into poor families in Britain will go on to experience poverty over the course of their lives

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that the behaviour and culture of individuals is one of the most important reasons for poverty

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that gender is the most significant division in British society today

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that Britain today is a patriarchal society

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that Britain is a meritocratic society

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that ethnicity is the most important source of inequality in British society today

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that power is distributed widely in contemporary British society

Exam questions – exemplar answers

Identify and describe **one** form of authority according to Weber.

[3 marks]

Student A

One form of authority Weber identified was charismatic authority. This is when people obey and respect a leader because they believe they hold exceptional qualities. For example, Nelson Mandela's ~~extraordinary~~ ~~authority~~ in South Africa could be argued to be resultant of his charisma.

Commentary

This student correctly identifies charismatic authority, they then go on to provide a relatively detailed description eg, referencing Nelson Mandela as an example of an individual possessing the 'exceptional qualities' required.

3 marks

Student B

One form of authority is the police. The police will stop you from making any trouble in the society. Also, they will arrest you if you commit a crime.

Commentary

This student gains no credit for their rather vague description of police powers which they haven't linked to the Weberian concept of rational (legal) authority.

0 marks

Identify and explain **one** disadvantage of using relative measurements of poverty.

[4 marks]

Student A

may not be valid. For example
~~Townsend~~ Townsend included ~~whether~~
whether ~~the~~ someone was able to ~~to~~
eat meat regularly in his deprivation
index. However, this may be a life choice
for example if someone is vegetarian.
Therefore this doesn't accurately measure
if someone is experiencing ~~class~~
poverty.

Commentary

This student identifies a possible disadvantage of using relative measurements of poverty eg, the questionable 'validity' of some measurements (albeit rather too succinctly expressed as an opening statement). Taken in isolation this wouldn't necessarily be worthy of credit but, in this case, they then go further. They explore the example of Townsend's use of meat consumption as an indicator in his research, observing that this could be seen as a 'life choice' rather than an indicator of relative poverty. On the basis of 'best fit' the student has clearly done enough to justify the award of full marks.

4 marks

Student B

One disadvantage is that they
might not be accurate and
you might not get the
reasons for the person being
in poverty.

Commentary

This student's observation that 'they might not be accurate' is simply too vague and unsupported to be worthy of credit.

0 marks

Student A

Townsend felt that poverty was a more prevalent issue ~~that~~ than the official statistics made out. He developed a relative deprivation index, consisting of twelve items that he felt a household must have, ~~that~~ if they didn't, they were deprived. He found that ~~25%~~ 24% of the population was experiencing deprivation, much higher than the official statistics' 7%. Townsend can be criticised for ~~his~~ his index being based on what he felt households should have, rather than what was actually poverty.

Marx felt poverty was a very pressing issue, caused by the capitalist society. He claimed that the bourgeoisie exploited the proletariat by owning the means of production, while the proletariat sold their labour for a wage, and couldn't raise their income, so were deprived. However, Davis and Moore identified a meritocracy, which they felt gave everyone the chance to achieve.

On the other hand, Murray felt that poverty is not an issue. He believed that poverty was a result of not taking responsibility, and was often 'self-inflicted' in order to claim benefits. He felt that people had the power to remove themselves from the situation, only didn't want to.

Davis and Moore believed that everyone had equal chance of achieving, and that poverty was important as a feature of society to encourage hard work, not something to be tackled. They can be criticised for ignoring factors that affect educational achievement, for example, ethnicity, gender, or class.

I think that poverty is an issue in today's society, but that ~~is~~ it can be tackled by the individual, ~~as~~ as it does play an important role.

Commentary

This student demonstrates some relatively good evidence of appropriate knowledge and understanding, together with the application of some relevant sociological theories and concepts eg, contrasting the work of Townsend on relative poverty with Murray's view of poverty as often resulting from a failure to take 'individual responsibility'. However, whilst there is some evidence of analysis and evaluation, it is limited; their conclusions are sometimes perfunctory eg, 'poverty is an issue, but it can be tackled by the individual'. On the basis of 'best fit', they just achieve entry into the 7-9 mark band (a weak 7/12 rather than a strong 6/12).

7 marks

Classic Texts: Sylvia Walby "Theorising Patriarchy" 1990

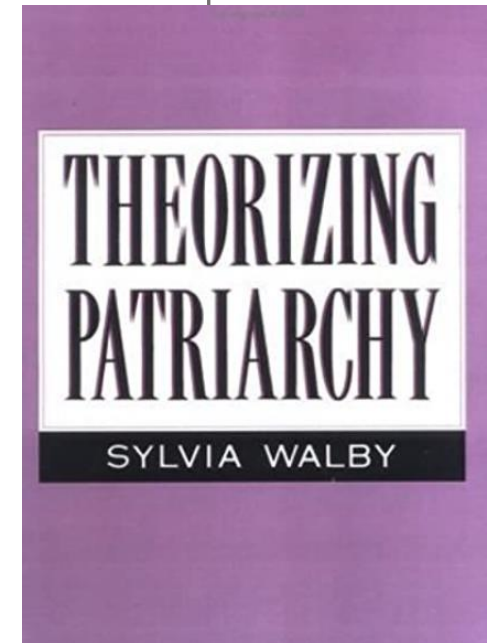
In this classic overview of feminist theory, Walby identifies six sources of patriarchal control.

The word patriarchy means a society controlled or dominated by men. Walby argues that contemporary society is still very much a patriarchy but that the nature of patriarchy did change through the 20th century. While it was once about men directly controlling their wives or daughters in the home, it is now more complex and happens throughout society.

The six sources of patriarchal control Walby identified were:

1. **Paid work.** Women are exploited at work. There is a gender pay gap (men get paid more than women), a glass ceiling (women are often not promoted to senior positions) and are often expected to take a mother role and therefore take career breaks or work part-time.
2. **Housework.** Walby calls this the "patriarchal relations of production". She argues that men benefit from women doing unpaid work in the home.
3. **Culture.** It is often argued that there is gender equality in countries like the UK now, but Walby highlights that there are still different norms and values for men and women, and that the culture is patriarchal. For example there is still a social norm that a man is "head of the household". Gender stereotypes are reinforced in the media.
4. **Sexuality.** There are very different expectations and standards between men and women when it comes to sexual behaviour and relationships. There is more censure (disapproval) of young women having sexual partners than there is for young men.
5. **Violence.** Walby notes that a feature of a patriarchal society is the threat of male violence against women. One of the ways in which women are controlled by men is that men could use their physical strength to force them to comply.
6. **The state.** This has changed of course - in the early 20th century women couldn't even vote and, as of April 2019 we have a female prime minister - but politics is male dominated too. Women form a minority of MPs and decisions for everyone are generally taken by men.

Critics of Walby and feminism would point to the great strides towards gender equality that have taken place over recent decades.



Classic Texts: Peter Townsend "Poverty in the United Kingdom" 1979

Via the use of questionnaires, Peter Townsend developed a new way to measure poverty in the UK which he argued was more appropriate and useful than the official measures.

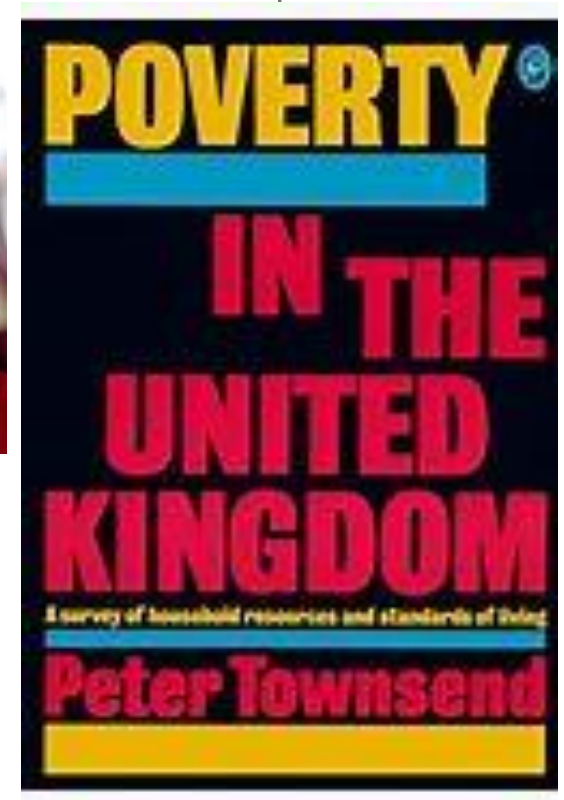
Townsend was critical of the official state measurement of poverty. This was the sort of means-testing performed by government to determine that people were entitled to welfare support or benefits of various sorts. Townsend argued that the government of the day decided this measure based on their political views and how much money there was available to spend.

Another measure was relative income. It could be determined how a household's income compared with the average income in a given area. Again Townsend did not think this was as useful or informative as it should be. Household incomes are difficult to measure (there might be more coming in than salaries) and different households have different outgoings.

Townsend developed a new measure instead which he described as relative deprivation. He accessed a large sample with his questionnaires and developed a measure - an index - based on a great number of things such as food, clothes, fuel, leisure activities, etc. He argued that people were relatively deprived if they did not have access to those things that were widely available in society.

By this measure, far more people were relatively deprived than the state considered to be in poverty. He found that approximately 22% of the population was in poverty, compared with approximately 6% and 9% based on the other measures.

However, his research methods have been questioned. After all, people may choose not to purchase certain things rather than not be able to afford them. A lack of fresh meat for vegetarians is not an indication that vegetarians are poor! Also, to generalise to the whole population he needed to be very confident that his sample was representative - official measures are based on a lot more data.



Classic Texts: Max Weber "The Theory of Economic and Social Organisations" 1947

Seen as one of the founding fathers of sociology, Weber's ideas about stratification provide an interesting contrast to those of Marx.

Weber was writing after Marx (although long before the 1947 publication of this English translation - he died in 1920). Weber is sometimes described as holding a debate with Marx's ghost. He agreed with Marx that there was a clear distinction between those who owned the means of production and those who did not, but he saw far more and more complex divisions than Marx did.

He saw divisions based on market situation. That is, some people could get higher salaries because they had skills that were more in demand (e.g. professional qualifications). He also saw social stratification on the basis of status, which he separated from class. Whereas class was based on the economy (e.g. market situation or relationship to the means of production) status was based on social position. He noted that some social systems had rigid status stratification (e.g. the Hindu caste system) while others were more fluid.

He also thought that economic power was only one source of power, again criticising Marx's idea that the bourgeoisie was the ruling class because of its economic position. Weber argued that power came from three main sources:

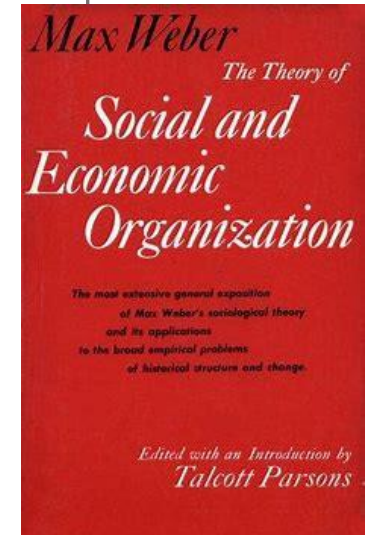
Charismatic. Some people were powerful because of their charismatic personality. People followed them because of their personal qualities.

Rational legal. This is where people are powerful because they are given authority through an accepted system (e.g. elected officials).

Traditional. This is where people have inherited power or are powerful through long-standing traditions.

Another way in which Weber's view of stratification differs from Marx's is in the role of a middle class. For Marx there were only two important classes: the bourgeoisie (ruling class) and proletariat (working class) and the working class would keep getting bigger and society would be further polarised between these two classes. However, Weber saw one consequence of capitalism to be an ever-increasing middle class, partly because of the need for a large bureaucracy. For this reason, among many, Weber did not think capitalism would create a proletarian revolution that would destroy it and replace it with something else.

A great deal of the sociology of stratification (certainly in relation to social class) has focused on a debate between those who largely agree with Karl Marx and those who largely agree with Max Weber. However, there are many sociologists who disagree with both, either because they disregard other important identities and conflicts in society (e.g. gender) or because they overstate class and status.



Classic Texts: Davis & Moore "Some Principles of Stratification" 1945

These functionalist sociologists explored how society ensures that the right people perform the right roles. They argue in favour of stratification.

Davis & Moore argue that there need to be strata - or classes - of people with different power and pay, in order to ensure the best best candidates get the most important jobs. This, they argue, is what ensures meritocracy.

They argued that, for society to function properly, all jobs and roles in society needed to be done by somebody. It was important that they were done by people most capable of doing the job or most suited to it. Where appropriate it was important that people underwent the necessary training to be able to do the job and it was important that people took the job seriously and did it properly.

To achieve this, they argue, society pays more for the jobs that are more functionally important, require more training or require more hard work/effort. As such, the rewards provide the incentive for talented and/or hardworking individuals to make the effort to do the difficult and responsible jobs. They argued that it was important that there were unequal rewards. If you could get paid just as much without undergoing the training or without the hard work and effort or exceptional talent, people may make a rational decision to perform "easier" roles. With the unequal rewards - and privileges - attached to the most important roles, ambitious individuals would compete with each other to get those rewards.

There are a lot of criticisms of Davis & Moore's conclusions. First of all, it is not clear that the most functionally-important jobs really do get the highest pay. Who determines that a merchant banker IS more important than a childcare worker or a nurse? When some industries are challenged about very high salaries (e.g. banking, broadcasting or sport) the explanation is usually that they need high pay, bonuses, etc. in order to attract the best talent. However, while it's clear that some people are really good at football, it is less clear that buying and selling shares, for instance, really requires exceptional talent. There are certain qualities people might have that will mean they are more suited to the job than others, but that is also true of jobs that command much smaller salaries.

Also, other criteria might influence people in their choice of careers, not just pay (e.g. job satisfaction, leisure time, work/life balance, etc.) Would we get better politicians (for example) if we paid them more? Or might it even be more effective to pay them less, so it was clear they were motivated by something other than just a pay cheque?

Marxists would strongly disagree with Davis & Moore over the idea that stratification is meritocratic and fair. They argue that social mechanisms, such as education, ensure that class inequality is reproduced from generation to generation, with the children of the ruling class growing up to be ruling class themselves, and the children of the working class growing up to be working class themselves.



Classic Texts: Fiona Devine "Affluent Workers Revisited" 1992

Devine carried out interviews with manual workers in the late 1980s to test ideas set out by Goldthorpe & Lockwood 20 years before.

The original "Affluent Workers" study, by Goldthorpe & Lockwood in 1969, presented the idea of a new working class that was sociologically very different from the traditional working class of previous generations. While the traditional working class was communal, interested in solidarity as a class and was critical of capitalism (and supportive of trade unions and the labour movement) they argued that new working class was quite different. This class, they suggested was much more individualistic, supportive of capitalism and aspirational for themselves and their families.

In testing these conclusions, among workers in the same town and industry, 20 years later, Devine disagreed with the conclusions from the 1960s. She dismissed the idea of a new working class - the people she interviewed had many traditional working-class values. She also found evidence of working-class people disliking aspects of capitalism. However, she did find that they no longer necessarily thought of the Labour Party or trade union movement as theirs or that they could deliver a more equal or just society.

She also said that she did not find evidence of what Goldthorpe & Lockwood called privatised instrumentalism. She agreed that people's lives were not as communal as in previous generations, they were not as isolated and home-based as Goldthorpe & Lockwood had predicted.

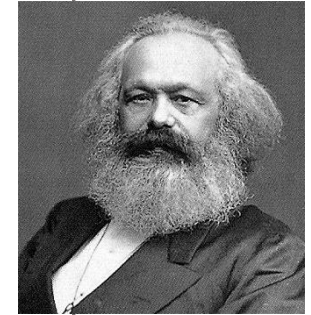
She did, however, find evidence of working-class families being increasingly affluent and aspirational. They did, as Goldthorpe & Lockwood had suggested, want to "better" themselves and their families and acquire consumer goods, brands and luxury items. However, this did not mean that they were unconcerned about the welfare of others.

The idea of the affluent worker - the aspirational C2s - was important in the 1980s, partly because of Politics. C2 workers had traditionally been expected to vote Labour but many voted for Margaret Thatcher's Conservatives in the 1980s, particularly in the south-east of England. However, Fiona Devine's research suggests this was more complicated than a complete change in values and the arrival of a new working class.



Classic Texts: Karl Marx "Selected Writings" 1857-1867

Marx wrote extensively throughout his life. His two best-known works are *The Communist Manifesto* (co-written with Engels in 1848) and *Capital* (1867). In the years between he developed his ideas about the nature of capitalism and the class system.



Karl Marx argues that social stratification is created by the economic system and is based on the relationship between people and that system. In his earlier writing he suggested that there had been class struggle throughout history. Different economic systems still saw a clear class divide between the powerful and the powerless. Marx argues that this is particularly apparent in capitalism.

He defines the social classes by their relationship to the means of production. The means of production refers things like factories and mills. The bourgeoisie (ruling class) own the means of production and employ the proletariat (the working class). Marx argues that the bourgeoisie exploits the proletariat. While the proletariat is paid a wage for its work, it is much less than the value that it adds through its work. This gap - between the real value of work and what workers are paid for it - is where the bourgeoisie makes its profit. Marx calls this surplus value. The proletariat are paid as little as the bourgeoisie can get away with - making them wage slaves.

How did the bourgeoisie get to own the means of production? Because they had capital. Tradespeople and businesspeople were able to accumulate money and invest it into industry during the industrial revolution. Once they owned the means of production, they formed the dominant class in capitalism. A key aspect of Marx's analysis of capitalism was that the proletariat was much bigger than the bourgeoisie. The proletariat was a large and growing class, while the bourgeoisie was a small but wealthy minority. So why did the proletariat put up with being exploited?

Marx identified two main ways in which this happened:

- 1) State power. Marx argued that the state (the government) worked in the interests of the bourgeoisie and would use its power - including the police and the army - to control and subdue the proletariat and prevent revolution.
- 2) Ideology. Much of the time, the bourgeoisie did not need to use violence to control the proletariat - it could use ideology. The bourgeoisie carefully created the illusion that inequality was inevitable or fair. Either it was God's will or else it was the result of meritocracy. Either way, the working class are convinced that capitalism is fair or inevitable and that they should be happy with their lot.

Marx argued that capitalism would eventually cause its own downfall. By enriching the minority and impoverishing the majority, eventually there would be a revolution and the proletariat would build a new communist society, without class struggle.

Critics of Marx suggest that capitalism has created great wealth and the working class has benefited from this too, with consumer goods and labour-saving inventions. Also, they would point to the possibility of social mobility: people from working-class backgrounds can reach the top through the hard work and talent (meritocracy).

Classic Texts: Charles Murray "Losing Ground" 1984

Charles Murray comes from a New Right perspective and explored and developed the idea of an underclass.

Murray's book was about American society, although he did later visit Britain and suggest the same thing was happening here. He argued that government policies were helping to create an underclass of people who did not work and depended on welfare benefits.

His argument is that policies that were intended to help the poor actually made the situation worse. For example, benefits for lone parents provide a perverse incentive for girls to get pregnant and for fathers not to stay and take responsibility for their children. To get welfare payments and qualify for social housing, girls would become single parents. Those children would then be brought up without a male role model and without any role model who went to work. They would then grow up believing it was normal not to work, and the girls would aspire to be young parents and the boys would not expect to have to work or be responsible parents.

For Murray, a whole class had emerged with generations who were in a welfare or poverty trap: they did not have an incentive to work and nor did they have the skills or values associated with work or enterprise.

Murray argued that this was not just a problem for the individuals involved but for the whole of society. First, supporting this underclass cost a lot of taxpayers' money but he also argued that it led to dysfunctional communities and a dysfunctional society with increased risk of crime, etc.

Critics of Murray suggest that he "blames the victim" - essentially blaming the poor for their own poverty. (He would respond that he did not blame the poor but instead blamed well-meaning governments). Others suggest certain economic policies cause unemployment (some would suggest economic policies preferred by the New Right!) rather than welfare policies. Some countries with much more generous welfare systems than the USA in the 1980s had much lower levels of unemployment (e.g. Sweden).

