

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND INEQUALITY

Study Guide

YEAR 11



ETHNICITY

"We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools."

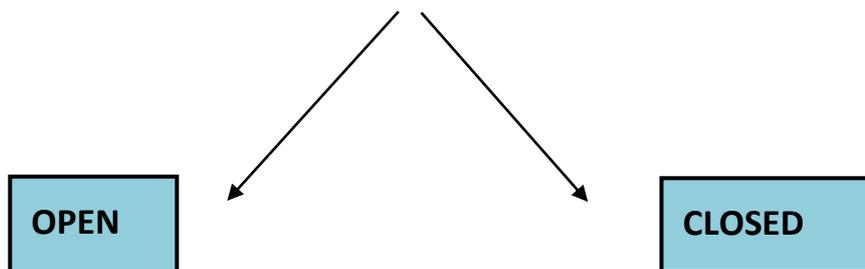
Martin Luther King Jr. (1929 - 1968)

What is Stratification?

Stratification describes the way in which different groups of people are placed within society. The status of people is often determined by how society is stratified - the basis of which can include;

- ⊕ Wealth and income - This is the most common basis of stratification
- ⊕ Social class
- ⊕ Ethnicity
- ⊕ Gender
- ⊕ Political status
- ⊕ Religion (e.g. the caste system in India)

The stratification of society is also based upon either an open, or closed, system.



- ⊕ Status is achieved through merit, and effort.
- ⊕ This is sometimes known as a **meritocracy**
- ⊕ The UK is a relatively open society, although disadvantaged groups within society face a glass ceiling.

- ⊕ Status is ascribed, rather than achieved
- ⊕ Ascribed status can be based upon several factors, such as family background (e.g. the feudal system consists of landowners and serfs)
- ⊕ Factors which play a role
 - Political factors e.g. societies organised on the basis of communism
 - ethnicity e.g. the former apartheid regime in South Africa

Structure of inequality

The power of the elite within society is based upon;

- ⊕ Income
- ⊕ Wealth
- ⊕ A network of social connections – sometimes known as the ‘old boys network’

In contrast the least powerful within society have few opportunities to escape from poverty There are different explanations for this:

- ⊕ the poorest members of society had become too reliant upon welfare benefits
- ⊕ This has led to a gradual loss in the ability of the poor to adopt values that would take them out of poverty;
 - such as self-reliance
 - personal initiative.
- ⊕ Most people within society are neither rich nor poor.
- ⊕ They form part of the middle-class –which is the largest social class in society.

Life chances are determined by factors such as;

- ⊕ Social class
- ⊕ Gender
- ⊕ Schooling
- ⊕ Ethnicity, etc.

Why do differences in life chances exist?

- ⊕ Social class
- ⊕ For example ethnic minorities often face a glass ceiling at work due to discrimination upon racial grounds
- ⊕ This can be either overt (or obvious), or covert (in other words, hidden)
- ⊕ Women also face the same problem
- ⊕ Members of the underclass form norms and values that often differ to the rest of society
- ⊕ They are caught in a poverty trap (or cycle) from which they find very difficult to escape from
- ⊕ This is despite changes to the welfare and benefits system designed to get welfare claimants into work.

WHO IS LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE POVERTY?

- ⊙ Single-parent household

- ⊙ Households with no paid workers
- ⊙ Families with children under 11 years old.
- ⊙ Single person households.
- ⊙ Pensioners
- ⊙ Children and young people
- ⊙ Those who left school before the age of 16 with little or no qualifications.
- ⊙ Women
- ⊙ Households with 4 or more children

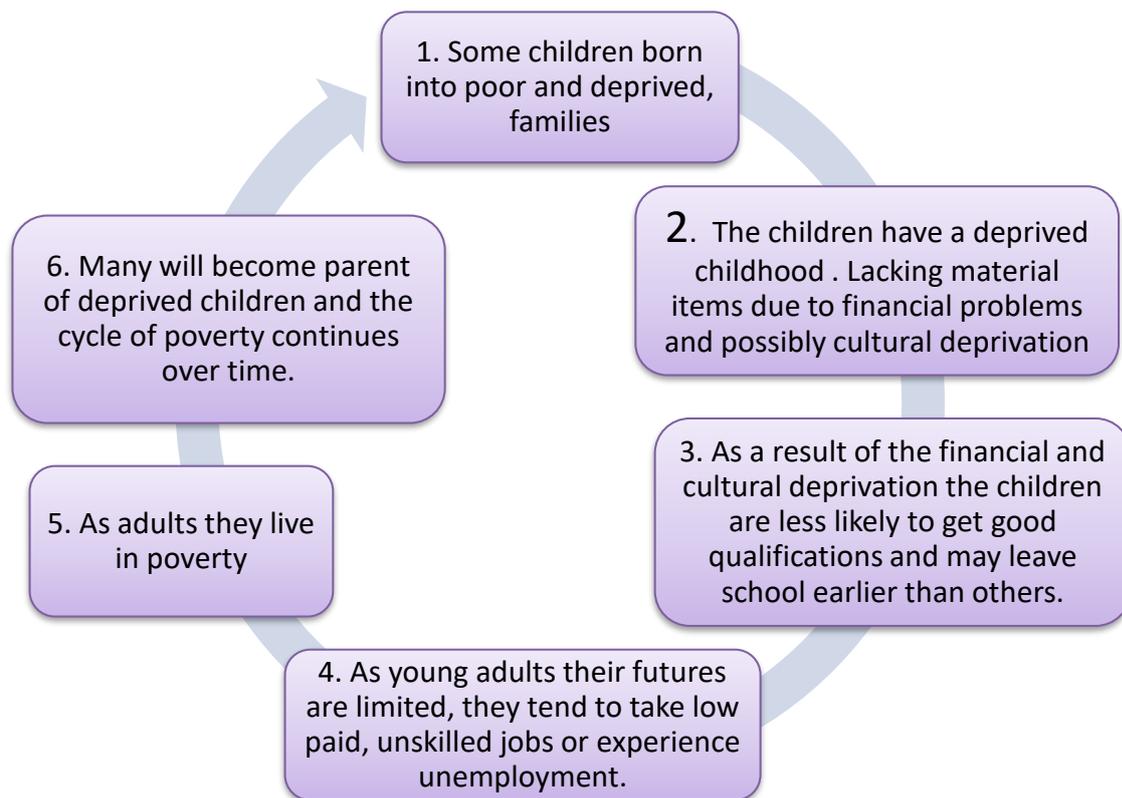


Poverty

Whilst it is difficult to measure poverty, there are two widely accepted methods;

- ⊙ **Absolute poverty** – This is when a person cannot provide for his/her basic needs such as food and shelter. Homeless people suffer from absolute poverty.
- ⊙ **Relative poverty** - The government's official statistics define the poverty level as those earning below 60% of average earnings.

There are other measurements of poverty; such as subjective poverty and environmental poverty, but they are less widely used.



The Cycle of Poverty

There is **cycle of poverty**. This occurs when those living below the poverty level find it difficult to escape from their circumstances. There are several reasons for this;

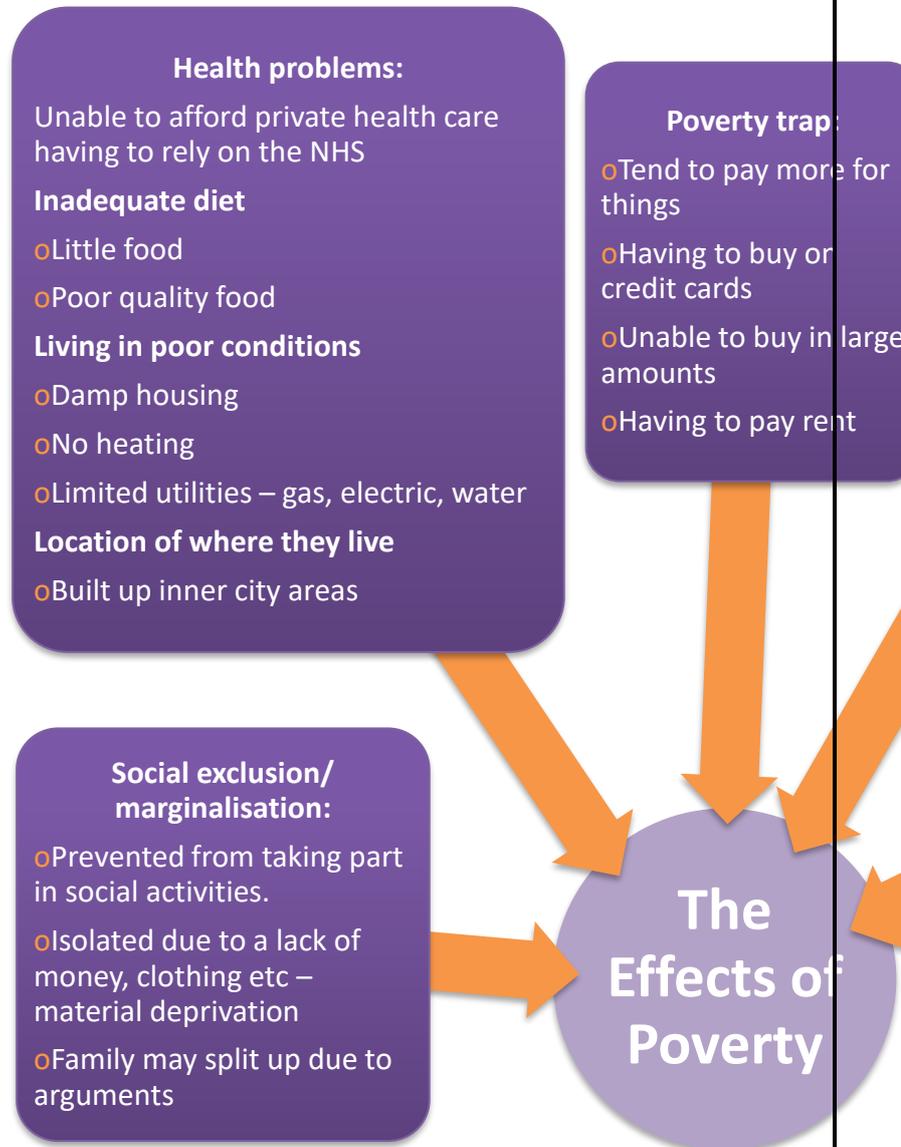
- ⊙ Welfare claimants either lose benefits, or experience a decline in the level of benefits received; when they return to work. They may therefore be worse off if they gain a job.
- ⊙ Welfare claimants adopt a 'culture of poverty ' which consists of a set of norms and values that differ to those of mainstream society. This makes it very difficult for them to re-enter the labour market.
- ⊙ New Right theorists argue that welfare payments undermine personal initiative, thus trapping many people into poverty. As such, the poor become more and more dependent upon the welfare state – and therefore find it very difficult to escape.

The impact of poverty can be hugely significant. This can include a;

- ⊙ Loss of status and income (if the person was previously in employment).
- ⊙ A decline in self-esteem.
- ⊙ A decline in personal health.

- ⊙ A feeling of social exclusion.

There are also implications for society. For example, a wide gap between rich and poor within society can result in social conflict



Explaining Poverty

Explanations for poverty		
New Right	Key point	Criticisms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ Developed by Charles Murray (1996) ⊙ There is an underclass in society that includes those living poverty. ⊙ The poor are dependent on benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ This theory blames the poor for being poor and therefore stereotypes and stigmatises those in poverty.

Who are the Poor?

and welfare and this takes away the incentive to work.

- ⊙ Single-parenthood and unemployment causes the underclass.
- ⊙ State benefits are too generous and makes poverty worse by creating welfare dependency.

- ⊙ Some critics argue that the underclass does not exist.

Social Exclusion

Key Points

- ⊙ Developed by Burchardt et al. (2002)
- ⊙ Some groups of people are excluded from being able to participate in society.
- ⊙ They are unable to buy the goods and services they need, feel they cannot participate or make a valuable contribution to society in a political or economic manner.
- ⊙ These people are suffering from low income, poor housing, poor skills, family breakdown and live in high crime areas and as a consequence are disadvantaged throughout the generations.

Criticisms

- ⊙ Not all people who experience these types of social exclusion experience poverty.
- ⊙ Stereotypical to a certain point.

Marxism

Key Points

- ⊙ Capitalism creates wealth for the owners and those in power, and therefore produces poverty amongst among sections of the working class.
- ⊙ The fear of poverty can keep workers disciplined. If people demand higher wages then employers can threaten to replace them with others who want their jobs.

Criticisms

- ⊙ There is a minimum wage for all employees.
- ⊙ Trade unions support employees to achieve higher wages.
- ⊙ Many employers have a bonus or share schemes for their workers.
- ⊙ Would communism really be the answer?

THE WORKING CLASS

- Working class people are far more vulnerable to poverty than other social classes for a number of reasons:
- Unskilled and poorly qualified groups are the ones most likely to suffer prolonged unemployment. The unemployment forces them to survive on low level welfare benefits.
- Even people who are employed may be poor if they are paid low wages. 45% of British workers earn less than two-thirds of the national average wage.
- Disadvantaged and working class groups often struggle to survive from day to day and so they are unlikely to be able save for their old age.
- The working class groups have higher disability and sickness rates.

WOMEN

- Women are more likely than men to remain in poverty for longer periods of time.
- Women are more likely to work part-time; and their wages are lower on average.
- Women continue to share the main responsibility for childcare.
- This may mean career breaks or working in lower paid jobs in order to fit in with their family commitment
- These career interruptions can lead to poverty in later life.
- Howard et al suggest that there has been a large increase in the number of lone parent families, largely female-headed, and these families are more likely to be poor.
- They point out that 45% of all poor children live with a lone parent.

ETHNIC MINORITIES

- Ethnic minority groups tend to have higher rates of poverty and disadvantage compared to other groups.
- Ethnic minority groups are more likely to live in deprived areas, more likely to be poor, more likely to be unemployed, and to experience ill-health and live in overcrowded housing than white people with similar qualifications.
- The poverty and exclusion that ethnic minority groups in the UK experience, include:
 - lack of access to good quality private housing
 - poor access to welfare
 - educational inequalities
 - lack of political representation
 - being the victims of negative media stereotyping
 - over-zealous policing
 - physical harm and fear from racist attacks.

Social Differentiation - Ethnicity

Evidence for ethnic inequalities

Men

- ⊙ Chinese, African Asians and Indians were better qualified than whites.

Women

- ⊙ Women of Indian, African Asian and Chinese origin all had high proportions of advanced qualifications.

Education

- ⊕ Most studies indicate that ethnic minorities tend to do less well than other members of the population. However, this doesn't apply to everyone some ethnic groups are particularly successful.

Employment

- ⊕ There are variations in occupational status according to gender and ethnic group.
- ⊕ The proportion of the Chinese with professional and managerial jobs is higher than that for whites.
- ⊕ There is evidence of some decline in inequality, but overall ethnic minorities still do less well than whites in employment.

Discrimination In The Labour Market:

- ⊕ There is considerable evidence that ethnic minorities are disadvantaged in the British labour market:
 - ⊙ They tend to be more likely to experience unemployment
 - ⊙ Tend to get lower paid jobs
 - ⊙ Tend to have lower status jobs

What is meant by the term stereotype?

A stereotype is a fixed, narrow conception of an individual or group, usually prejudicial and generally resistant to easy change.

Examples Of Stereotypes That May Be Applied To Minority Ethnic Groups

Negative connotations are often applied, such as:

- ⊕ **Lazy** – many people believe “ethnic minorities don’t work, they just take money from the government “ of course this is not true
- ⊕ **Culturally inferior** – people from ethnic minorities may have different religious or cultural beliefs which seem ‘strange’ and so are seen as less valid than the popular culture in UK
- ⊕ **Criminals and parasites** - many people believe “people from ethnic minority groups are more likely to commit crime and are a danger to society”
- ⊕ **An economic burden on the rest of society** – many people believe “people from ethnic minority groups just come to UK and rely on the government to provide them with housing and welfare and don’t contribute to the country in any productive way”
- ⊕ **Less moral** – they may have different norms and values which may be regarded as less moral by the dominant culture

There are a number of areas in which ethnic minorities are discriminated against

Employment

- ⊙ Overall ethnic minorities are found in lower level jobs
- ⊙ A fewer percentage are in Managerial positions
- ⊙ They do more shift work and part-time work
- ⊙ They have less chances for promotion



Housing

- ⊙ They live in the worst areas
- ⊙ They live in the worst accommodation
- ⊙ With the highest rates of overcrowding

Education

- ⊙ There is discrimination in the attitudes of teachers. It is important to motivate students – often teachers have lower expectations of certain ethnic groups so they don't do very well
- ⊙ There is discrimination in the process of streaming and options choices for ethnic minorities so they don't have a fair chance to do well in school

Welfare

- ⊙ Ethnic minorities are less likely to use health services especially older people possibly because they don't speak English
- ⊙ Most of the welfare agencies don't provide a translator so that ethnic minorities can understand what is available to them

The media

- ⊙ The media doesn't always reflect the multicultural nature of the country
- ⊙ There are few role models in terms of presenters from ethnic minorities
- ⊙ There are few programmes that reflect the lifestyle or culture of ethnic minorities
- ⊙ Media content does not address particularly minority audiences and it is almost never in minority languages.

Even though there have been various government attempts to eliminate discrimination such as the Passing of the Race Relations Act in 1965 It is difficult to change attitudes held deep within the culture

What social factors are most important in explaining the inequality experienced by some minority ethnic groups?

Members of **minority ethnic groups** are more **likely than** the rest of the population to:

- ⊙ Leave school without qualifications
- ⊙ To be unemployed
- ⊙ To be living in poverty
- ⊙ Many social factors such as economic deprivation, poor educational attainment and discrimination in the work place explain the inequality experienced by minority ethnic groups
- ⊙ Ethnic minorities are often disadvantaged in all these areas, this greatly affects their

life chances:

Economic Deprivation (Poverty)

- ⊙ People from ethnic minority groups are more likely to have a lower income than the white majority
- ⊙ Poverty among ethnic minority groups is linked to:
 - ⊕ Lack of qualifications and skills
 - ⊕ High rates of unemployment
 - ⊕ Low pay when employed
 - ⊕ Living in deprived social environments i.e. areas with poor housing, failing school etc

Poor Educational Attainment (Education)

- ⊙ Ethnic groups differ greatly in income, housing standards and level of job - these inequalities are often the cause of differences in educational attainment
- ⊙ There is evidence that those ethnic groups which do very badly are those with the highest level of deprivation
- ⊙ The educational success of children is closely related to the educational standards of the parents
- ⊙ Students born in Britain may have parents not fluent in English so they may not have shared cultural values

Discrimination in the work place

- ⊙ Generally people from ethnic minorities are less likely to be in professional and managerial positions and more often in lower paid and routine work.
- ⊙ They are all under represented in the professions (like law) and senior management positions
- ⊙ They are less likely to be promoted
- ⊙ They are more likely to do shift work and part-time work
- ⊙ They have higher unemployment rates than the average
- ⊙ They have lower incomes than the average

Ethnic minorities are often used as scapegoats for the problems that face society generally.

Scapegoating

- ⊙ In periods of economic decline or social tension certain groups are picked on to be blamed for the problems of society
- ⊙ In Britain ethnic minorities are often used as scapegoats for unemployment, inner city deprivation and high levels of crime
- ⊙ The idea of scapegoating has been taken further by Marxist sociologists
- ⊙ They have suggested that when there is competition among poorer groups for scarce resources, such as housing and jobs.
- ⊙ The real reason for deprivation is exploitation by the rich
- ⊙ However the media encourage poor white people to blame non-whites.

As a result there is hostility between the races that prevents them from joining together to seek a common solution

Social Differentiation - Gender

Evidence For Gender Inequalities

Educational Achievement

- ⊕ Differences between womens' and men's experiences start at school. Although girls now outperform boys in terms of numbers of GCSEs, A level qualifications, in post-16 education there are clear differences in the subjects taken.
- ⊕ 59% of girls and 48% of boys gain five or more GCSEs grades A*–C
- ⊕ 43% of girls and 34% of boys gain two or more A levels or equivalent qualifications.

Subject choice

- ⊕ The most common GCSE subjects, such as English and mathematics, are roughly balanced in terms of entries from girls and boys.
- ⊕ A level/entries are more segregated: English Literature and Social Studies each had 70% of entries from girls, whilst 76% of Physics entries were by boys.
- ⊕ A high level of segregation is seen in many sectors of Job training
 - ⊙ Some of the most **female-dominated** sectors are early years care and education, hairdressing, and health and social care.

- ⊙ Training in plumbing, construction and the technical sector are almost entirely by men.
- ⊕ The most segregated areas of learning in further education are construction and engineering, technology and manufacturing, where at least 90% of learners are men.
 - ⊙ Women make up 91% of learners in hairdressing and beauty therapy.

Higher Education

- ⊕ In only a few subject areas in Higher Education are there more male than female undergraduates.
- ⊕ Exceptions are computer science with 80% male students and engineering and technology with 85% male students.
- ⊕ The most female-dominated subjects are education and subjects allied to medicine, such as nursing, physiotherapy etc, where 81% of students are female.

Employment

- ⊕ Nearly half of people in employment are women, however women and men differ in the jobs they do and the hours they work.
- ⊕ Nearly half of women (44%) and about one in ten men who work are part-time.
- ⊕ More than four-fifths of skilled trades people and process, plant and machine operatives are men.
- ⊕ In administrative and secretarial occupations, as well as in personal service jobs, at least four-fifths of workers are women.
- ⊕ Women hold the majority of jobs in the education & health & social work sectors
- ⊕ Men are the majority in transport, storage & communication & construction.

Vertical segregation

- ⊕ Women tend to be **under-represented** at the most **senior positions**.
- ⊕ Middle class women often proceed so far and then encounter the glass ceiling where they can see where they would like to go but the ceiling (e.g stereotypical assumptions, sexism etc) impedes further progress.

The Gender Gap

- ⊕ The gender pay gap compares the earnings of female and male employees, whilst the gender income gap compares the individual incomes of all women and men.

- ⊕ Average hourly earnings for women working full-time are 18% lower than for men working full-time, and for women working part-time hourly earnings are 40% lower.

Pensions

- ⊕ 56% of female employees and 63% of male employees of working age are members of one or more occupational or personal pension schemes.
- ⊕ However, women are less likely to make regular contributions to a pension.

How women are discriminated against in the workplace

- ⊕ **Low wages** – women are a cheap source of labour they earn about 20% less than men reflecting the different occupations and lack of promotion
- ⊕ **Poor job conditions** – women often have to work in factories where the job conditions are not very good
- ⊕ **Less job security** - women often work part-time so that they can fit in with family obligations this gives them less job security
- ⊕ **Greater likelihood of unemployment and redundancy** – the lower paid jobs that women often do there is a bigger chance of being laid off or fired
- ⊕ **Segregation into a narrow range of work tasks based on stereotypes of traditional female roles** – in general most women are employed in a narrow range of occupations and in work that is considered to need less skill this covers three main areas:
 - Clerical
 - Service work like shop assistants receptionists etc
 - Professional and technical like nursing or technicians
- ⊕ **less chance of promotion** – women's chances for promotion are less because they still have to combine the twin roles of mother and employee. Having time off for having children also affects their promotion chances.

How may an employer discriminate against female workers?

- ⊕ Women form about half the workforce today yet they are seriously under-represented in management and the higher levels of the professions (such as medicine and law)
- ⊕ They earn on average about 80% of men's wages
- ⊕ They are far more likely to be in part-time work than men

- ⊕ They are more likely to be concentrated in a few areas of employment, particularly clerical and caring work (like nursing) and the service industries

Reasons why an employer may discriminate against female employees include:

- ⊕ **Personal prejudice** – a lot of male employers may be worried about giving women promotion because they believe that they will leave their jobs at some point to have children and this will cause disruption to the company. They might also have to take more time off to care for their children if they are sick
- ⊕ **Economic factors** – employers often exploit female workers by giving them less hours and less money, they can do this because most women won't complain or are not members of a union
- ⊕ **Fear** – employers worry that if they treat female workers too well there might be a bad reaction from male employees or the male dominated trade unions which could affect their business

It is important to REMEMBER that:

- ⊕ UK is still a patriarchal society.
- ⊕ Even though there may be more women than men in the workforce now they are still discriminated against and treated very badly compared to men.

How far may the INEQUALITY experienced by women in paid employment be explained in terms of the INEQUALITY within the home?

Introduction

- ⊕ Feminist researchers are interested in examining the position and role of women in society in relation to men.
- ⊕ From the feminist point of view society is **patriarchal** this refers to the domination of society and institutions within it (such as the family) by men
- ⊕ This means that males are the leaders of society and exercise control in a number of areas for example within the family or at work
- ⊕ Girls are socialised differently from boys they learn to be more passive and submissive
- ⊕ At school, girls do better than boys in their studies
- ⊕ In employment, however, women, earn less and have less chances of promotion

The Status of women

- ⊕ The status of most women within the family parallels (is the same as) the status that they hold in the job market
- ⊕ Women, earn no money for the jobs that they perform in terms of housework and child rearing, although these jobs are necessary for the survival of the family
- ⊕ Despite the importance of such work, Women's work in the home and the childcare that they do is not valued by society they should really be paid for doing it
- ⊕ Men can earn money outside the home this gives them a higher status position within the family
- ⊕ The fact that women can't go out to work adds to their dependence within the family
- ⊕ Gender inequality is historically related to the subordinate (lower) position of women within the family in terms of rule making and control of resources (e.g., money).
- ⊕ The person in the family who earns the money has the power
- ⊕ This relationship is continued within the job market where historically men have secured the best positions by making the rules (controlling management and labour) and by receiving unequal (greater) rewards.
- ⊕ The dominant partner in any social relationship can maintain power by a combination of control over decision making processes and control of wealth

Women who work

- ⊙ **women** are likely to earn less than men
- ⊙ **women** are likely to have less job security than men
- ⊙ **women** are less likely to be promoted than men
- ⊙ **women** are more likely to experience poverty than men

Women who don't work

- ⊙ Some married women who do not work experience a kind of hidden poverty
- ⊙ Their husbands may earn an adequate wage but only give his wife a small amount for running the household
- ⊙ So for example she may go without herself to make sure the children are fed and clothed
- ⊙ A woman may be poor in a household with an income above the poverty line or she may be more deeply in poverty than the rest of her family

Social Differentiation - Class

Social stratification means the division of people into various social groups having different status and prestige. **Economic factors** may divide people in modern societies for example:

- ⊙ **Wealth** - inheriting a house or land from parents/family – the ownership of personal savings - the ownership of art, jewellery and other valuable items – having these forms of wealth is an important indicator of social class position. The very wealthy do not need to work
- ⊙ **Income** – it is important because it has consequences for people's life chances – those with higher incomes will be able to pay for private health care and education
- ⊙ **Housing** - Type of house – detached/terrace/semi; bought or rented. Also often certain neighbourhoods or even parts of the country where people buy/rent their houses are associated with certain social classes. Those with a low income may find themselves without a choice and suffer from housing which is damp or overcrowded
- ⊙ **Position in the division of labour/occupation** – the type of job that you have gives you status. For example a doctor will have a higher status than a nurse.
- ⊙ **Control of household finance** – many feminists see society as being **patriarchal**, that is, dominated by men. Many feminists argue that men have the most power in families and tend to have better jobs in terms of pay and status.

⊕ The main types of divisions are **caste** (as in India); **estates** (as in feudal times); **slavery** and **social class**. Other divisions are based on age, gender or ethnic group.

- ⊙ **Caste** – This is a closed society with little or no chance of upward mobility. A person's social position is decided at birth, it is ascribed. There is a status hierarchy, each caste has its own specific occupations which are almost hereditary. Some occupations are considered superior and sacred while certain others degrading and inferior.
- ⊙ **Estate** (also known as feudalism in the middle ages) – positions in society were ascribed with no chance of moving up or down. Society was divided into groups
 - King at the top
 - Noble lords
 - Knights
 - The peasants – who were the majority of the population

- ⊙ **Slavery** – divides people into slave owners and slaves. Slaves were often treated very badly and could be bought and sold. They had no control over what happened in their lives.

⊕ **Social class** is the main form of social stratification in modern industrialised society. It is based on **economic** and **status** differences.

- ⊙ **Class systems** are not based on religion or law or race, but on economic factors such as jobs and money

- ⊙ **Class societies** are open societies in that people can experience **downward** or **upward social mobility** i.e. they can move up or down the class structure through jobs, the acquisition of wealth or marriage

- ⊙ **Class systems** are **meritocratic** i.e. people are not born into **ascribed roles** but are encouraged to better themselves through achievement at school, and at work through working hard and gaining promotion

⊕ **Social mobility** occurs between different classes, i.e. movement between classes in a social class system; but not in a caste system

⊕ Ways in which a person can achieve a higher social position

- ⊙ **Job promotion** – they can work hard and get a better position in the company that they work in. for example they could start out on the factory floor but end up in a management position if they work hard and have talent.
- ⊙ **Entrepreneurial success** – they could start their own company and through a combination of luck and hard work could become successful and make a lot of money. They could then achieve a higher social position

⊕ **Social mobility** is movement up or down the class structure. There are a number of difficulties in trying to measure social mobility

⊕ In Britain **social mobility** has involved more people entering the 'service class', i.e. the professional and managerial occupations.

⊕ For women to become **upwardly mobile** they have to make a choice between marriage/children and concentrating on their careers.

⊕ Other factors affecting social mobility are individuals' motivations and aspirations - the 'will to succeed'.

⊕ The **functionalist view** of social mobility is based on a **meritocracy**, where those who are able can succeed and move upwards.

⊕ The **Marxist view** says that really only a tiny proportion of the population own significant wealth and nothing changes this. Nobody joins the owners, but the owners

simply benefit from this limited social mobility by getting the best managers to run things for them.

⊕ **Life chances** are affected by social class

- ⊙ Unskilled **working-class** people will have poorer health and larger families.
- ⊙ People in **Social Class I** will have better education and more material possessions

⊕ The different classes' views and ideas on politics, leisure and social issues will be very different

⊕ There are three different explanations of social class:

- ⊙ **The Marxist theory** is based on economics where society is divided between those who own wealth (**the bourgeoisie**) and those who sell their labour to the wealthy (**the proletariat**); such theories have been developed from the work of Karl Marx.
- ⊙ Followers of **Max Weber** say that **three elements** divide people: **economic factors, status** and **power**; and these together influence a person's life chances.
- ⊙ **The Functionalist explanation** compares society to the human body with some parts more important than others. There are criticisms of all three explanations

⊕ In measuring social class **occupation** is very often used as the most important factor. The Registrar-General's classification scale is used to classify occupations

⊕ Certain factors have caused changes in the class structure in British society. Such factors include

- ⊙ **The growth of affluence** – people have better jobs and more money
- ⊙ **Unemployment**
- ⊙ More people owning their own homes
- ⊙ **Changes in the educational system** – giving increased social mobility
- ⊙ Some maintain that there is a **'new'** working class as well as the **'traditional'** working class which still exists.
- ⊙ **Fragmentation** (breaking up) of the working class has taken place.

⊕ **The middle class** has also been fragmented (broken up), e.g. clerical workers have undergone a process of **proletarianisation** (have sunk into the working class). Their importance has decreased.

⊕ The growth of the professions – but there is a distinction between the **traditional professions**, such as doctors or solicitors, who have higher income and status than the **new professions**, such as social workers or teachers.

⊕ Britain is a **capitalist society**; the top 10% in Britain own 50% of wealth. **Wealth** means assets that are worth money if sold, made up of property or stocks and shares.

Marxism

The Marxist view is that the working-class are exploited under capitalism

⊕ Karl Marx argues that societies are divided into two main classes

⊕ What makes them different is whether or not the member of the classes own property or not

⊕ Those who own property such as factories, mines or buildings are able to make money simply through having these

⊕ They do not need to work for themselves but could pay someone to be a manager or supervisor

⊕ Marx calls them the bourgeoisie or ruling class

⊕ Those who don't own property have to work for a living

⊕ All they own is the ability to work so they have to sell this to the bourgeoisie by working in the factories and mines etc

⊕ Marx calls them the proletariat or working class

⊕ According to Marx the bourgeoisie will always pay the proletariat as little as possible for their work

⊕ This increases the profits that the bourgeoisie make

⊕ This is exploitation of the workers because they are not getting paid the full value of their work

⊕ There is always a conflict of interest between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat – class conflict

⊕ So the bourgeoisie get richer and the proletariat get poorer

⊕ Society would eventually be made up of a small number of rich people and a large number of poor people

⊕ Marx thought that the situation would then be so unstable that there would be a revolution

⊕ When the workers realized that they were being exploited they would develop class consciousness

- ⊕ The revolution would bring a new kind of society where everyone would be equal
- ⊕ This classless society would be communism which would replace the current capitalist society

Criticism of Marx

- ⊕ Marx argued that there were two social classes but in practice the class structure is much more complicated with a wide variety of groups existing in society
- ⊕ He didn't take into account the middle class – you can't group doctors with factory workers
- ⊕ He claimed that when the tension between workers and owners was too intense revolution must come about
- ⊕ Instead, organisations like trade unions, have developed to look after the needs of the

How the Social Class Divisions Have Changed Since the Nineteenth Century

workers

Embourgeoisement

- ⊙ **Living standards** for everyone have risen in the last century.
- ⊙ For example, **life expectancy** – how long people live – has grown enormously.
- ⊙ The working class today is better off than in the past.
- ⊙ Most have secure incomes, own televisions, washing machines, cars, even houses.
- ⊙ Does this mean that there are no real differences between the working classes and the middle classes.
- ⊙ Is everyone middle class now?
- ⊙ The idea that differences have disappeared is called embourgeoisement.

There are still some differences in which working class jobs remain different from middle class ones:

- ⊙ The working environment is less likely to be clean and safe
- ⊙ The work is more physically demanding and even dangerous
- ⊙ The work is less likely to require qualifications such as exam passes
- ⊙ There are fewer benefits such as pension schemes and perks such as company cars

The working class has had to change and is smaller than it used to be but it has not disappeared

Class fragmentation

The working class is less solid than it once was. It has fragmented into:

- ⊙ The growing numbers of unemployed and the poor who are being left behind – **the underclass**
- ⊙ Those who work in the declining manufacturing industries and who still hold traditional working class values - the **'traditional' working class**.
- ⊙ Those who are more likely to live in the south of England, to be buying their own homes and to be working in the more secure jobs of light industry - **the new working class**.

It has been claimed that the working class has divided and there are now clearly distinguishable groups within the working class. The first of these is the **traditional working class** and the second is the **new working class**. The third is known as **the underclass**.

The traditional working class

They maintain a completely different life style to that of the middle class, they:

- ⊙ Live in council (public) houses and rent their homes.
- ⊙ Live in the traditional working class communities, in inner cities or in industrial towns
- ⊙ Work in manual occupations
- ⊙ Solidly support the Labour Party
- ⊙ Are more likely to become unemployed

The new working class,

They are:

- ⊙ Likely to own their own homes
- ⊙ Likely to live on new housing estates in the suburbs
- ⊙ Likely to be affluent owning many consumables such as cars and TV's
- ⊙ Less likely to give their total support to the Labour Party
- ⊙ More likely to be in secure jobs

The emergence of a welfare-dependent underclass.

- ⊙ The majority of the working class now has quite healthy prosperous lives compared to the past.
- ⊙ A minority do not.
- ⊙ Those who cannot work, such as the long-term unemployed and the disabled and chronically ill are in effect shut out of much of what most people take for granted,
- ⊙ These groups are sometimes referred to as the underclass, a term which means people at the very bottom of society but not fully part of society

The growth of the middle class

- ⊙ The middle class has grown much bigger in the twentieth century
- ⊙ After the Second World War there was a big growth in middle class occupations like teachers and social workers
- ⊙ The newly created jobs, were taken by people from working class families
- ⊙ In the 1980's a lot of traditional working class jobs such as coal mining declined
- ⊙ New jobs that replaced them were often middle class ones like tourism and computers

Class And Life Chances

People from a middle class background may have better work opportunities because:

- ⊙ **Parental expectations** – middle-class parents have high expectations for their children to do well in school and go into a good career
- ⊙ **Education** – middle-class children stay in school longer and are more likely to continue into higher education (university) which in turn leads to better careers
- ⊙ **Wealth** - middle-class parents are able to provide sufficient funds for children to stay on in education or training
- ⊙ **Contacts** – middle-class parents often have contacts in different profession which may help their children when finding employment or with promotion.

Why do people in middle class occupations, such as doctors and lawyers tend to earn more than working class occupations in modern industrial societies?

Reasons:

- ⊙ **Higher levels of training** – professional occupations like lawyers require educational qualifications and a long period of training. These higher professional qualifications mean that they enjoy high rewards, status and job security.
- ⊙ **Longer periods of training** means that not everyone has the time or money to train for such professions. This means that they are in short supply – so they can demand high salaries
- ⊙ **Professional organisations** – professionals have strong occupational associations that protect and actively pursue their interests in terms of improving terms and conditions e.g. **‘The Law Society’** and **‘The British Medical Association’**

So does social class background still influence peoples' opportunities in life?

‘Life chances’ affected by class are:

- ⊙ How long people live (life expectancy)
- ⊙ How healthy people are
- ⊙ How much and what they eat
- ⊙ The kind of housing they live in
- ⊙ The level of education they reach and the qualifications they achieve
- ⊙ How likely they are to be employed or to be made redundant
- ⊙ Their chances of being killed or injured at work
- ⊙ The money they can spend on both necessities and luxuries
- ⊙ How often they can take a holiday and what kind of holiday
- ⊙ Their chances of being the victim of crime

The power of the elite within society is based upon:

- ⊙ Income
- ⊙ Wealth
- ⊙ A network of social connections – sometimes known as the ‘old boys network’

The least powerful within society still have few opportunities to escape from poverty

Life chances are determined by factors such as:

- ⊙ Social class
- ⊙ Gender
- ⊙ Schooling
- ⊙ Ethnicity

Differences In Life Chances Still Exist

Social class background still influences an individual's opportunities in life

In Education

For example **middle class children** will do better in school than **working class children** because:

- ⊙ **Education** – **middle class** parents put a high value on education and expect their children to work hard and do well so that they can go on to university and get good qualifications
- ⊙ **Wealth** – **middle class** parents are able to provide sufficient funds for their children to be able to continue with education or training;
- ⊙ **Parental expectations** - **middle class** parents have high expectation for their children especially in terms of career choices
- ⊙ **Middle class contacts** – **middle class** the people their parents know may help them to provide contacts for employment or help them with promotion.

In Work

For example: **the middle class** will also do better in employment than **the working class** because:

- People from **middle class** backgrounds are more likely to be in professional and managerial positions
- ⊙ The **middle class** are more likely to be in senior management positions and professions (like law)
- ⊙ The **middle class** are more likely to be promoted
- ⊙ The **middle class** have higher incomes
- ⊙ The **middle class** have better job security and benefits

In Health

For example: **the middle class** will also do better than **the working class** health-wise

- ⊙ The **middle class** professional can expect to live on average seven years longer

than an **unskilled working man**

- ⊙ The **middle class** visit the doctor more often and tend to have more regular checkups
- ⊙ The **middle class** have a better diet and take more exercise so have less serious illness than working class people

So

- ⊙ Even though all industrial societies have seen an increase in equality and affluence since the end of the Second World War.
- ⊙ Even though some of the working class are becoming more like the middle class through embourgeoisement
- ⊙ There are still people who don't do well and have not benefited from the new affluence in

How the working class differs from the Middle class

The working class differs from the middle class in a number of ways		
	Working Class	Middle Class
Values – the members of each class share similar values:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">⊙ Loyalty to workmates⊙ A belief in pursuing goals as a group rather than individually⊙ An emphasis on immediate gratification (i.e. enjoy yourself now)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">⊙ Individualism⊙ A belief in deferred gratification (i.e. planning for the future)⊙ An image of society as a place where there are opportunities for

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ A fatalistic attitude to life believing that life chances depend on luck ⊙ A belief in traditional conjugal roles (i.e. roles of husbands and wives) 	<p>individuals who work hard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ A belief in joint conjugal roles (i.e. roles of husbands and wives)
<p>Health</p> <p>Living longer and staying healthy seems to be associated with different social groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ Working class people experience poorer mortality than the middle class ⊙ Working class people are more likely to die before retirement of cancer stroke and heart disease than middle class people ⊙ Working class people are three times more likely to have a serious illness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ A professional can expect to live on average seven years longer than an unskilled working man ⊙ Visit the doctor more often and tend to have more regular checkups ⊙ Have a better diet and take more exercise so have less serious illness than working class people
<p>Education</p> <p>Success seems to be associated with different social groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ Less likely to attend nursery school ⊙ More likely to start school unable to read ⊙ More likely to get fewer GCSE's or to get low grades ⊙ Less likely to get into Year 12 and go to university ⊙ Less likely get a well paid job because of insufficient qualifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ More affluent people are more successful than poorer people ⊙ Higher levels of education which in turn leads to better careers ⊙ Parents have enough money for their children to stay at school or go on to university ⊙ Parents have greater expectations that their children will do well
<p>Work</p> <p>Economic success seems to be associated with different social groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ The working class tend to receive lower wages ⊙ They enjoy less job security ⊙ They receive fewer fringe benefits than the middle class ⊙ Have less chances for promotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ Are often in professional jobs and so get paid more than the working class ⊙ Have good job security ⊙ Get more benefits and perks from their job ⊙ Have more contacts which may help with promotion or finding employment

Are Class Divisions Disappearing In Modern Societies?

It is said that class today is less important than what occupation you have and how much money you spend

But there is strong evidence that it remains very important.

The power of the **elite** within society is based upon;

- ⊙ Income
- ⊙ Wealth
- ⊙ A network of social connections – sometimes known as the ‘old boys network’

The least powerful within society still have few opportunities to escape from poverty

Life chances are determined by factors such as:

- ⊙ Social class
- ⊙ Gender
- ⊙ Schooling
- ⊙ Ethnicity, etc

Differences in life chances still exist and other aspects of inequality such as **gender** and **ethnicity** have become as important or more important than class

For example

- ⊙ **ethnic minorities** often face a glass ceiling at work due to discrimination upon racial grounds; which can be either overt (or obvious), or covert (in other words, hidden).
- ⊙ **Women** also face the same problem.
- ⊙ There is also a group of people who don't do well and have not benefited from the new affluence in society, they are **the underclass**

The Underclass

- ⊙ Members of the underclass form norms and values that often differ to the rest of society.
- ⊙ They are caught in a poverty trap (or cycle) from which they find very difficult to escape from.
- ⊙ This is despite changes to the welfare and benefits system designed to get welfare claimants into work.

Embourgeoisement

This is a term that means ‘becoming bourgeois’ or ‘becoming middle class’.

- ⊙ The term has been used as the basis of a theory that suggests that **the manual working class** are becoming more like **the middle** class.
- ⊙ The argument is that all industrial societies have seen an increase in equality and affluence since the end of the Second World War

For example:

- ⊙ Increased salaries
- ⊙ Greater job security
- ⊙ Higher disposable income

These changes have eroded (worn away/changed) the distinctive values and lifestyle of the working class.

- ⊙ As the incomes of **the working class** have increased, so have their capacity to buy consumer goods such as mobile phones, PCs, iPods, cars and their own homes.
- ⊙ Those who put forward the theory of **embourgeoisement** argue that working class people are also adopting middle-class values and lifestyles to match their incomes

So

- ⊙ Even though there are more chances for **embourgeoisement** we can't say that class divisions are disappearing in modern societies
- ⊙ The claim that Britain is becoming a **meritocracy** is questionable
- ⊙ The odds still seem to be stacked in favour of those at the top, there is still not **equality of opportunity**

Social Mobility

Social mobility is defined as the ability to be able to move up the hierarchy (**embourgeoisement**) or down the hierarchy (**proletarianisation**) from one social group to another.

embourgeoisement, meaning the adoption of the norms and values of the bourgeoisie

proletarianisation, meaning as more work becomes deskilled the workers become proletarian

Vertical mobility describes movement between strata both up and down the stratification system. It can usually be seen as an example of long-range mobility, displaying a change in **class status** and can be examined through:

- ⊙ **intra-generational**, which is mobility that describes movement of an individual over his or her lifetime, for example, as a result of changing career or promotion
- ⊙ **inter-generational**, which is mobility that refers to movement between generations. As mentioned earlier, people who grew up in working class areas with working class parents have themselves become middle class through obtaining middle class lifestyles.

How Much Social Mobility There Is In Modern Societies?

There are a number of practical problems when conducting research into whether social mobility) either exists or is possible within the class structure of the UK.

- ⊙ There has been a shift upwards in inter generational mobility. T
- ⊙ There is now more room at the top and fewer jobs in the industrial sector.
- ⊙ More young people are leaving the working classes and joining the middle classes.

Barriers to social mobility –

- ⊙ Gender and ethnic background can be seen as problematic areas for movement.
- ⊙ If you are female and from an ethnic minority you may experience little or no social mobility.

Sociologists have carried out the following influential **studies** concerned with questions of social mobility.

⊕ The 'Oxford Mobility Studies' by Goldthorpe et al. (1972, 1980 and 1986)

Among the conclusions of this study were the following:

- ⊙ Long-range social mobility rates had increased in the UK since after World War Two, suggesting that class categories and society had become more open.
- ⊙ However, it was suggested that this increase could have been due to changes in the occupational structure of the UK; de-industrialisation had led to fewer traditional working class jobs.

A.H. Halsey, Change in British Society (1995)

Among the conclusions of this study were the following:

- ⊙ Halsey found that the evidence supported the claim that there was more upward social mobility in British society over the past century with less downward social mobility, although some did exist.
- ⊙ These changes in the class system Halsey likened to a shift from a pyramid to a lemon shape.
- ⊙ The pyramid contained a small number of upper class at the top, a larger number of middle class in the middle and a disproportionate number of working class at the bottom.
- ⊙ The lemon shape contained small numbers of upper and working class at either end with a large middle class in-between.

So

We can say that even though it is possible for people to move up the class structure however it is not easy. It is much easier for those at the top to stay there.

Glossary: words you should know

- | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ⊙ Social stratification | ⊙ Distribution of wealth | ⊙ Life chances |
| ⊙ Social class | ⊙ Prejudice | ⊙ Redistribution of wealth |
| ⊙ Caste | ⊙ Racism | ⊙ Market situation |
| ⊙ Slavery | ⊙ White-collar worker | ⊙ Social mobility |
| ⊙ Estate | ⊙ Blue-collar worker | ⊙ Inter-generational social mobility |
| ⊙ Status | ⊙ Working class | |
| ⊙ Ascribed status | ⊙ Middle class | |
| ⊙ Achieved status | ⊙ Aristocracy | ⊙ Intra-generational social mobility |
| ⊙ Poverty line | ⊙ Underclass | |
| ⊙ Poverty trap | ⊙ Discrimination | ⊙ Changing class structure: |
| ⊙ Absolute poverty | ⊙ Scape-goating | ⊙ New and traditional working |
| ⊙ Relative Poverty | | |

class

- ⊙ Proletarianisation
- ⊙ De-skilling
- ⊙ Embourgeoisement
- ⊙ Patriarchy
- ⊙ Gendered division
of labour