

## Weber & Inequality

Argued that power can take a variety of forms: economic, social and political.

**Market situation:** How well you are able to swap your skills for pay.

**Status:** The respect with which a person or status position is regarded by others.

**Party:** The ability of people or groups to achieve their goals despite opposition from others.

Argued there were three main ways that people gain authority. **Traditional:** Based on long-established customs, e.g. British royal family.

**Charismatic:** Based on the power of personalities e.g. Martin Luther King Jr.

**Rational/legal:** Based on a system which has clear/ logical rules for choosing the most qualified/capable leader, e.g. elections in the UK and USA.

**Evaluation:** Underestimates the importance of generational wealth.

## Feminism & Inequality

**Patriarchy:** Male-dominated society. Feminists argue that women are generally lower down the stratification system than men and have less power, wealth and status and fewer life chances.

Sylvia Walby – argued that there are 6 structures of patriarchal control. Paid work, housework, culture, sexuality, violence and the state.

•She argued that violence against women is a consequence and a cause of women's inequality •She claimed that the extent of domestic abuse against women is hugely underestimated. •She said we live in a culture that undermines and devalues women.

**Evaluation:** Liberal feminists argue there has been a march of progress, things are improving.

# Social Stratification

## Functionalism & Inequality

**Meritocracy:** A system in which people are rewarded for their ability and hard work by gaining the best jobs, wealth and/or status.

Functionalists say that society needs poverty as a form of motivation. Nobody wants to be poor, and this encourages people to work hard. The rewards that come with being at the upper levels of society make people want to work hard.



## Davis and Moore – Role Allocation:

They argued that unequal rewards meant that people will get a job that matches their ability and the effort they are prepared to make... •Some occupations are so important that society needs to know that the most skilled and committed will do them •The education system sifts and sorts people into their appropriate roles •Inequality is essential as it motivates people to work hard to get to the top.



**New Right:** •Argue that society would struggle without stratification. •Believes the best way to organise society was to have unequal rewards •Argues the UK is fairly meritocratic – the rewards go to those who work hard and have ability •Claims middle class people have the best occupations because they are naturally cleverer and work harder.



**Social class:** The New Right think that we live in a classless society and that the old British class system doesn't matter any more.

**Evaluation:** Achieved status can only get you so far. Ascribed status such as generational wealth still has far more sway over success than it should.

## Marxism & Inequality

**Marx:** Said that societies in history have had inequality and a stratification system and were divided into two main groups. Struggle: All history is about the struggle between these two groups: master and slave or lord and serf.

Marxists argue that modern societies are **capitalist** – and still divided into two groups like they have been throughout history. This will never change.



**Bourgeoisie:** The ruling classes who own all the important businesses (e.g. factories, mills, railways and mines) – a small group, but rich and powerful.

**Proletariat:** The working classes – everyone who has to work for a wage – much larger, but weaker group (who Marx hoped would rise up and fight for better conditions.



**Conflict:** Marx believed that this system will always end in conflict. •Marx believed that the owners will always want to take advantage of the workers, paying as little as they can •Workers will always want to be paid more money and the owners will always want to pay them less.

**False class consciousness:** Workers don't realise they are being exploited – they think their life should be hard as their parents and grandparents went through the same. This stops workers uniting to try to improve their situation.



Marx believed that the conflict would only end when the workers realised how they were being exploited. They would then rise up and take over from the ruling class, creating a more equal society (the basis of **communism**). Some countries tried to create communist societies where they believed inequality would come to an end.

**Evaluation:** communism hasn't worked where it has been tried. Are we really so passive?

### Social Class & Life Chances

**Income:** Money received regularly, e.g. wages, benefits, pensions, investment interest or rent from houses. Working classes receive less income than middle classes.

**Wealth:** Things of value that you own/what's left after you've paid your bills e.g. savings, property, jewellery, antiques, etc – working classes have less wealth (middle classes often inherit theirs).

**Employment:** Working class people are far less likely to obtain highly paid jobs. Have more surveillance and poorer working conditions.

**Crime:** Working class people are more likely to be victims of crime and more likely to be convicted of crime. This can affect future opportunities.

**Education:** Working class children are less likely than others to gain five good passes at GCSE or go to university. The 'old boys' network' means public school students dominate top jobs.

**Health:** diet, housing, weight, mental health and life expectancy.

Media: Working class issues are often ignored. Less likely to be in higher powered jobs. Stereotyped portrayals and representation.

**Evaluation:** Benefits are there as a safety net. Many areas are changing and things are slowly becoming more equal.

### Sexuality & Life Chances

Heterosexuality presented as the norm, e.g. few openly gay sports men. Have had to fight for equal rights with heterosexuals.

**Law:** Homosexuality was illegal until 1967 in England and Wales (and 1980 in Scotland). **Age of consent:** Lowered to 18 in 1994, and to 16 in 2000. **Section 28:** Banned schools from promoting homosexuality-repealed in 2003.

**Adoption:** Same-sex couples were allowed to adopt from 2005. **Marriage:** Same-sex marriage legalised in 2014.

### Gender & Life Chances

Men have enjoyed superior life chances at home and work, with higher incomes and more power in UK society.

**Gender pay gap:** Women earn 14% less than men for the same jobs (on average). Traditional female roles: e.g. childcare, domestic work, caring, beauty, are all low paid. **Motherhood wage penalty:** 12 years after giving birth, a woman could earn 33% less per hour than men (lack of quality part-time work, which wastes women's talents). **Glass ceiling:** Women find it difficult to reach the top jobs in society – women can see these jobs, but discrimination stops from reaching them. **Dual burden:** When women do get the chance to work, they usually still pick up the main burden of care in the family at the same time – so work shorter hours, with lower earnings and less chance of promotion.

**Media** shows stereotypical portrayals of men and women – Mulvey calls this the 'male gaze'. Women are shown in narrow roles, usually as wives/mothers.

- Males are more likely to be the victims of crime
- Males have much higher conviction rates
- Men have a lower life expectancy
- Men show similar rates of mental illness to women, the suicide rate is three times higher than for women
- Girls are now outperforming boys in education.

**Progress:** Men have not had to fight for their position like women, but have been significantly affected by the increase in women's rights.

### Age & Life chances

**Ageism:** Prejudice and/or discrimination based on a person's age  
**Loss of importance:** Earn less they have less spending power than other groups; 50-64 year olds often overlooked for jobs (despite having skills and experience).

**Sexism:** Older women are likely to experience ageism and sexism together, e.g. sacked from TV presenting roles (doesn't happen to older males). **Lack of rights:** Young people are not allowed to vote on important issues that affect them (e.g. Brexit).

**Stereotypes:** Old people are seen as forgetful, stubborn, helpless, grumpy, bigoted, etc. Young people perceived as troublemakers, criminals, etc.

### Ethnicity & Life Chances

**Ethnicity:** Group a person belongs to (e.g. religion, nationality, way of life)

**Race:** Implies humans are split into different groups based on biology, and is used by some to claim that one race is superior to others.

**Ethnicity pay gap:** Ethnic minorities are 2 ½ times more likely to be unemployed, have insecure jobs, and even with a degree still earn ¼ less on average than white colleagues.

**Health:** Ethnic minorities also face worse health (mainly connected to poverty,) and racism leads to poor mental health.

**Moral panics:** E.g. gang culture, and 'Islamophobia' – linked to media coverage.

**Rise in Far Right:** Racism divides the working class, e.g. migrants are 'taking all the jobs' (scapegoats for economic problems) – stops the working classes uniting to fight against the ruling classes.

**TV representation:** Increase in recent years. Previously ethnic minorities were under-represented and were shown as stereotypes.

### Disability & Life Chances

**Disablism:** Attitudes can stop people having equal opportunities, e.g. assumption that people with disabilities can't work, have children and shouldn't live independently.

**Employment:** People with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed or working part-time.

**Disability pay gap:** 11% for men and 22% for women.

**Hate crimes:** Over 2,500 crimes targeted at disabled people per year. **Medical model of disability:** Disability is a tragedy that the disabled person has to cope with.

**Social model of disability:** Views people as disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment – and that society that needs to change and make adjustments to support disabled people.