

ITS04 – Social inequality (1): Stratification and social class

1. Stratification and inequality: definition, examples of measures and questions

A. Inequality of conditions and inequality of opportunities

- Inequality of conditions refers to the unequal distribution of material goods
- Inequality of opportunities refers to the unequal distribution of « life chances » (access to education, health...)

B. Stratification and inequality

Stratification system = “the *complex of institutions that generate inequalities* in income, political power, social honor, and other valued goods”. 3 components:

- (1) “the social processes that *define certain types of goods as valuable and desirable*,
- (2) the rules of allocation that *distribute these goods across various roles or occupations* in the division of labor [...]
- (3) the mobility mechanisms that *link individuals to these roles or occupations* and thereby generate unequal control over valued goods” (Grusky, 2007)

C. Multidimensional inequality

(adapted from Grusky, 2007, Table 1 Types of valued goods and examples of advantaged and disadvantaged groups)

Assets		Examples	
Asset group	Types	Advantaged	Disadvantaged
Economic	Wealth Ownership	Billionaire Capitalist	Bankrupt worker Employed worker
Power	Political power Workplace authority Household authority	Prime minister Manager “Head of household”	Disenfranchised person Subordinate worker Child
Cultural	Knowledge	Intelligentsia	Uneducated
Social	Social clubs	Country club member	Non-member
Honorific	Occupational Religious	Judge Saint	Garbage collector Excommunicate
Civil	Right to work	Citizen	Illegal immigrant
Human	On-the-job	Experienced worker	Inexperienced worker
Physical (health)	Mortality Physical disease Mental health	Person with long life Healthy person Healthy person	A “premature” death Person with AIDS, asthma Depressed, alienated

D. Different scales of inequality, from worldwide to workplace inequalities

a) Inequality worldwide: 2 examples : income ratio and life expectancy

b) Inequality nationwide: a measure of economic inequality in France: share of wealth owned by the X% richest

c) Inequality at the level of work organizations

“I define inequality in organizations as systematic disparities between participants in power and control over goals, resources, and outcomes; in work place decision-making such as how to organize work; in opportunities for promotion and interesting work; in security in employment and benefits; in pay and other monetary rewards; and in respect and pleasures in work and work relations. Organizations vary in the degree to which these disparities are present and in how severe they are”.

Acker, Joan. 2009. “From glass ceiling to inequality regimes.” *Sociologie du travail* 51(2):202

E. Inequality: why and how? Systems of inequality

- Class
- Race
- Gender

2. Social class: theoretical debates and empirical measure

A. What is social class ?

a) Working definition

(drawing on Barbusse and Glaymann, 2004; Vitt, 2007): Social class =

- a stratification system that divides a society into a hierarchy of social positions
 - a particular social position within a class stratification system (lower class, working class, middle class...)
- A large social group sharing common socio-economic characteristics (wealth, status, power) and similar lifestyles.

b) Key issues/dimensions in the definition of social class:

- Objective/subjective dimensions (being a member of a class based on objective criteria vs feeling of belonging)
- Income-based definition vs multidimensional perspectives (including status, power, prestige, culture...)
- Conflict vs gradation of strata/functionalist view
- Small/large number of classes
- Social reproduction vs mobility

B. Theoretical perspectives on social class

a) Karl Marx (1818-1883)

Capitalism as an economic system, or a particular “mode of production”

In any mode of production, the production of goods is based on 2 types of “productive forces”: means of production and labor force.

In the **capitalist** mode of production, the **relations of production** are organized as followed:

- The means of production are owned by a small number of people who don't need to work to earn a living : the **bourgeoisie**
- All other people (the **proletariat**) must sell their labor force in order to earn a living
→ Conflictive interests; **exploitation** and class struggle

« The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, **oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another**, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.

The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones.

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature: it has **simplified the class antagonisms: Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat** ».

Marx, K., 1977 [1848], “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” in Tucker, R., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Norton, p. 474

Superstructure: everything in the realm of culture and social norms (legal and political institutions, religions, etc) is meant to ensure the bourgeoisie's domination and the proletariat's acceptance of exploitation and domination

Distinction between **class « in itself »** and **class « for itself »** (class consciousness) → objective/subjective dimensions of class belonging

b) Max Weber (1864-1920)

A more complex view of social stratification, combining

- Class (economic situation)
- Status (prestige)
- Power

c) Lloyd Warner (1898-1970)

d) P. Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002)

- Born to a modest family in the southwest of France
- ENS, philosophy diploma
- 1955-1960 Drafted into the army and sent to Algeria → ethnographic research in Kabylia
- 1964 Position at EHESS; from 1968 on, head of the *Centre de sociologie européenne* (CSE)
- 1975 creation of the journal *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*
- 1981 Sociology chair at the Collège de France

Main publications [date of original publication in French in brackets]

1979 [1964] *The Inheritors: French Students and Their Relations to Culture*, University of Chicago Press.

1990 [1970] *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, Sage

1977 [1972] *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge University Press

1984 [1979] *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Harvard University Press.

1999 [1993] *Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, Polity.

1996 [1992] *Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, Stanford University Press.

1998 *State nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*, Polity

1998 *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*, Stanford University Press.

2001 [1998] *Masculine Domination*, Polity.

2005 *The Social Structures of the Economy*, Polity

[(habitus)(capital)] + field = practice

Goal: understanding the causes and consequences of social **practice**: why and with what effects do people behave and think the way they do?

→ Cultural tastes and practices in a very broad sense

Practices are determined by **habitus**, which is class-specific, and unfolds in specific **fields** in which each individual's position derives from the characteristics of their **capital** (volume, composition, and change in these over time).

Habitus as class-specific

« [...] one must return to the practice-unifying and practice-generating principle, i.e., **class habitus, the internalized form of class condition and of the conditionings it entails**. One must therefore construct the **objective class**, the set of agents who are placed in homogeneous conditions of existence **imposing homogeneous conditionings and producing homogeneous systems of dispositions capable of generating similar practices**; and who possess a set of common properties, objectified properties, sometimes legally guaranteed (as possession of goods and power) or properties embodied as class habitus (and, in particular, systems of classificatory schemes »

P. Bourdieu, 1984 [1979], *Distinction*, p. 101

Each individual's class position derives from the characteristics of their **capital** (volume, composition, and change in these over time).

Capital = material and immaterial resources possessed by individuals

Types of capital:

- *Economic*

- *Cultural* (diploma, cultural references...)
 - Symbolic (prestige, honors)
 - Social (one's social network/relations)
- + **composition**: an individual's capital is not only defined by its volume but also by its composition (a CEO has more economic capital than an academic, but the academic has more cultural capital...)
- + **trajectory**: how the volume and composition of an individual's capital has evolved over time (an academic who is the son/daughter of an academic will have a different experience/habitus than an academic who is the son/daughter of a CEO)
- **A 3-dimensional social space (volume of capital, composition of capital, change in these over time)**

Social practices unfold in various **fields**, in which agents compete and position themselves in a hierarchy according to field-specific criteria: examples:

- Educational field (Grandes écoles vs mass university)
- Artistic field (Picasso vs Sunday painter)
- Economic field (Fortune 500 vs local grocery shop)
- Religious field (pope vs deacon)

Distinction and symbolic domination

The dominant classes use their practices to distinguish themselves and exert social domination over the lower classes (playing golf rather than soccer, drinking champagne as opposed to beer, listening to classical music as opposed to pop)

Class-specific cultural practices: is the upper-class highbrow or « omnivore »? (Peterson and Kern, 1996 ; Coulangeon, 2005)

Questioning the role of cultural practices in social distinction and hierarchies (Lamont, 1992)

C. The empirical measure of social class in France: socio-occupational categories (PCS)

a) Definition

PCS = Professions et catégories socio-professionnelles (initially "CSP")

A classification created at the INSEE in 1954 (revised in 1982 and 2003), massively used since then.

An original classification, based on the combination of 3 criteria (Desrosières et Thévenot, 2002 [1982], Desrosières, 2009)

- Employment status
- Occupation or trade (*métier*)
- Skill

Occupational categories (<i>Professions et catégories socio-professionnelles, PCS</i>)
1- Farmers (<i>Agriculteurs exploitants</i>)
2- Craftpersons, small traders and business owners (<i>Artisans, commerçants, chefs d'entreprise</i>)
3- Managers and intellectual occupations (<i>Cadres et professions intellectuelles supérieures</i>)
4- Intermediary occupations (<i>Professions intermédiaires</i>)
5- Employees (<i>Employés</i>)
6- Workers (<i>Ouvrier</i>)
7- Retired
8- Unemployed who have never worked and other inactive

b) The general evolution of the class structure in France

Occupational categories (<i>Professions et catégories socio-professionnelles, PCS</i>)	1962	1975	1995	2006
1- Farmers (<i>Agriculteurs exploitants</i>)	15,9	7,8	3,2	2,5
2- Craftpersons, small traders and business owners (<i>Artisans, commerçants, chefs d'entreprise</i>)	10,9	8,1	6,9	6,3
3- Executives and intellectual occupations (<i>Cadres et professions intellectuelles supérieures</i>)	4,7	7,1	12,1	15,4
4- Intermediary occupations (<i>Professions intermédiaires</i>)	11	16	19,9	23,5
5- Employees (<i>Employés</i>)	18,5	23,4	29,4	29,5
6- Workers (<i>Ouvrier</i>)	39	37,3	27,2	22,8

c) Measuring social mobility

Distinction between intra- and intergenerational mobility (Sorokin, 1927)

- Intragenerational mobility: change of social class occurring within a person's life course
- Intergenerational mobility: change of social class from one generation to the other: when one's social class differs from one's parents'

2 measures of intergenerational mobility:

- absolute mobility (table 3)
- social fluidity (table 5)

Intergenerational mobility in absolute terms (table 3)

Source: Vallet L.-A., 2014, « Mobilité observée et fluidité sociale en France de 1977 à 2003 », *Idées économiques et sociales*, 175, p. 9.

Social fluidity as measured by comparing odds-ratios (comparing inequalities of life chances between different social classes) : Source: Vallet L.-A., 2014, « Mobilité observée et fluidité sociale en France de 1977 à 2003 », *Idées économiques et sociales*, 175, p.11.

TABLEAU 3. Destinées sociales selon le milieu d'origine en 1977, 1985, 1993 et 2003

Fils (Filles)		1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Pères								
1. Agriculteurs exploitants	1977	37 (39)	8 (8)	3 (1)	10 (7)	6 (29)	36 (16)	100
	1985	32 (30)	9 (8)	5 (2)	13 (11)	7 (33)	34 (16)	100
	1993	25 (20)	7 (7)	10 (2)	15 (15)	8 (41)	35 (15)	100
	2003	28 (11)	6 (4)	9 (6)	18 (20)	7 (47)	32 (12)	100
2. Artisans, commerçants et chefs d'entreprise	1977	2 (3)	29 (21)	14 (5)	21 (16)	8 (42)	26 (13)	100
	1985	1 (2)	28 (19)	19 (9)	21 (23)	7 (38)	24 (9)	100
	1993	2 (2)	28 (10)	22 (12)	20 (25)	7 (41)	21 (10)	100
	2003	1 (1)	21 (6)	23 (14)	24 (25)	9 (46)	22 (8)	100
3. Cadres et professions intellectuelles supérieures	1977	2 (2)	10 (6)	51 (20)	26 (40)	5 (31)	6 (1)	100
	1985	1 (0)	9 (6)	57 (28)	24 (37)	6 (26)	3 (3)	100
	1993	1 (0)	9 (3)	51 (33)	24 (31)	8 (29)	7 (4)	100
	2003	0 (0)	7 (3)	52 (33)	24 (37)	8 (25)	9 (2)	100
4. Professions intermédiaires	1977	1 (1)	9 (12)	22 (5)	39 (28)	11 (43)	18 (11)	100
	1985	0 (1)	11 (6)	30 (10)	33 (32)	10 (39)	16 (12)	100
	1993	0 (1)	8 (4)	32 (15)	33 (31)	10 (42)	17 (7)	100
	2003	0 (0)	7 (3)	32 (16)	33 (33)	10 (42)	18 (6)	100
5. Employés	1977	1 (1)	9 (9)	16 (4)	31 (19)	16 (52)	27 (15)	100
	1985	1 (1)	9 (8)	21 (5)	30 (23)	16 (52)	23 (11)	100
	1993	0 (0)	8 (4)	19 (11)	32 (25)	14 (49)	27 (11)	100
	2003	0 (1)	6 (3)	20 (9)	29 (25)	18 (52)	27 (10)	100
6. Ouvriers	1977	1 (4)	8 (8)	5 (1)	20 (9)	9 (46)	57 (32)	100
	1985	1 (2)	9 (7)	8 (2)	22 (12)	11 (49)	49 (28)	100
	1993	1 (1)	8 (5)	9 (3)	23 (15)	10 (49)	49 (27)	100
	2003	1 (1)	6 (3)	10 (4)	23 (16)	13 (56)	47 (20)	100

Lecture : en 1977, parmi 100 fils d'agriculteurs exploitants, 37 étaient eux-mêmes agriculteurs exploitants. À la même date, parmi 100 filles d'agriculteurs exploitants, 39 étaient elles-mêmes agricultrices exploitantes (données en italiques entre parenthèses).

Champ : hommes et femmes français âgés de 35 à 59 ans, actifs occupés ou anciens actifs occupés à la date d'enquête.

Source : Insee, enquêtes « Formation et qualification professionnelle » de 1977, 1985, 1993 et 2003.

Vallet L.-A., 2014, « Mobilité observée et fluidité sociale en France de 1977 à 2003 », *Idées économiques et sociales*, 175, p. 9.

TABLEAU 5. Odds ratios symétriques en 1977, 1985, 1993 et 2003

		Artisans, commerçants et chefs d'entreprise	Cadres et professions intellectuelles supérieures	Professions intermédiaires	Employés	Ouvriers
Agriculteurs exploitants	1977	68,1 (34,6)	326,6 (577,5)	224,2 (106,3)	88,6 (60,5)	40,9 (23)
	1985	58,5 (34,5)	771,8 (*)	1103,4 (147,1)	99,9 (79,3)	31,6 (27,4)
	1993	53 (13,3)	194,9 (1923,1)	109,7 (31,2)	143,5 (37,6)	45,9 (27,1)
	2003	137,9 (15,9)	502,0 (206,9)	111,8 (49,7)	199,9 (16,7)	68,8 (16,8)
Artisans, commerçants et chefs d'entreprise	1977		10 (15)	5,8 (3,2)	6,3 (2,7)	8,2 (6,3)
	1985		9,8 (10,3)	4,1 (4)	7,6 (3,1)	6,0 (8,3)
	1993		7,2 (7,5)	6,1 (3)	6,5 (3)	8,1 (5)
	2003		6,6 (5,4)	4,4 (2,3)	7,4 (1,8)	6,9 (4,1)
Cadres et professions intellectuelles supérieures	1977			3,5 (2,7)	10,8 (9,4)	91,7 (410,4)
	1985			2,5 (2,3)	7,6 (11,1)	110,8 (109,4)
	1993			2,3 (2,2)	4,4 (5,2)	40,9 (67,1)
	2003			2,3 (1,8)	5,8 (8,1)	28,8 (63)
Professions intermédiaires	1977				1,8 (1,8)	6,3 (9,2)
	1985				1,8 (1,8)	4,6 (6,4)
	1993				1,5 (1,5)	4,3 (7,3)
	2003				2,1 (1,6)	3,8 (6,6)
Employés	1977					3,6 (2,3)
	1985					3,3 (2,6)
	1993					2,4 (2,5)
	2003					2,4 (1,9)

* L'échantillon de 1985 présentant un effectif nul dans la case « père cadre ou profession intellectuelle supérieure – fille agricultrice exploitante », l'*odds ratio* correspondant ne peut être estimé.

Lecture : en 1977, les chances d'être cadre ou profession intellectuelle supérieure plutôt qu'ouvrier étaient 91,7 fois plus fortes pour les fils de cadres ou professions intellectuelles supérieures que pour les fils d'ouvriers. À la même date, les chances d'être cadre ou profession intellectuelle supérieure plutôt qu'ouvrière étaient 410,4 fois plus fortes pour les filles de cadres ou professions intellectuelles supérieures que pour les filles d'ouvriers (données en italiques entre parenthèses).

Champ : hommes et femmes français âgés de 35 à 59 ans, actifs occupés ou anciens actifs occupés à la date d'enquête.

Source : Insee, enquêtes « Formation et qualification professionnelle » de 1977, 1985, 1993 et 2003.

Source: Vallet L.-A., 2014, « Mobilité observée et fluidité sociale en France de 1977 à 2003 », *Idées économiques et sociales*, 175, p.11.

3. References

Acker, Joan. 2009. "From glass ceiling to inequality regimes." *Sociologie du travail* 51(2):199–217.

Barbusse, Béatrice and Dominique Glaymann. 2004. *Introduction à la sociologie*. Vanves: Foucher.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984 [1979]. *Distinction*. Boston: Harvard University Press.

Coulangeon, Philippe. 2005. "Social stratification of musical tastes: questioning the cultural legitimacy model." *Revue française de sociologie* 46:123-154.

Desmond, Matthew and Mustafa Emirbayer. 2009. "What is racial domination?" *Du Bois Review* 6:335-355.

- Desrosières, Alain and Laurent Thévenot. 2002. *Les catégories socioprofessionnelles*. Paris: La Découverte/Repères.
- Desrosières, Alain, 2009, « Socio-occupational categories », *Courrier des statistiques*, English series n.15. http://www.insee.fr/fr/ffc/docs_ffc/cse15b.pdf
- Erikson, R. & Goldthorpe, J. H. (1992) *The Constant Flux*. Oxford University Press, Oxford
- Grusky, David B. "Stratification and Inequality, Theories of." *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*. Ritzer, George (ed). Blackwell Publishing, 2007
- INSEE, Nomenclature des PCS : http://www.insee.fr/fr/methodes/default.asp?page=nomenclatures/pcs2003/liste_n1.htm
- Lareau, Annette. 2003. *Unequal Childhoods : Class, Race, and Family Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lamont, Michèle. 1992. *Money, Morals and Manners: The Culture of the French and the American Middle-Class*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lamont, Michèle. 2000. *The Dignity of Working Men. Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Marx, K., 1977 [1848], "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in Tucker, R., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Norton, p. 473-483.
- Peterson, R. and R. Kern. 1996. "Changing highbrow taste: from snob to omnivore." *American Sociological Review* 61:900-907.
- Ridgeway, Cecilia. 2014. "Why Status Matters for Inequality." *American Sociological Review* 79(1):1-16.
- Sorokin Pitirim, 1927, *Social mobility*, New York, Harper.
- Tilly, Charles. 1998. *Durable Inequality*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- University of California, *UC Atlas of global inequality*, <http://ucatlas.ucsc.edu/index.php>
- Vallet, Louis-André, 2014, « Mobilité observée et fluidité sociale en France de 1977 à 2003 », *Idées économiques et sociales*, 175, p. 6-17.
- Vitt, Lois A. "Class." *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*. Ritzer, George (ed). Blackwell Publishing, 2007.