

Social stratification: personal research of future social class

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' Social Stratification is the division of large numbers of people into layers according to their relative property, power, and prestige; applies to both nations and to people within a nation, society, or other group. ' (Henslin, James, 2011) There are basically four systems to socially stratify a family. Social class, as one of the systems will be investigated in the following paragraphs. (1) Identification of my family's social class position and explanations of it: Social class is fundamentally determined by how much wealth you have.

Income, education and gender are three major factors that I would consider to determine my family's social class position. Concisely speaking, I came from a single-parent family which I only live with my mother. My mother is the only person who is officially employed in my family. Her occupation is a salesperson at a beauty centre with unstable income. One other important financial income of our family will be the alimony given from my father who no longer lives with us. Our household income per month is about \$10, 000. According to the 2006 Population By-census, the median monthly domestic household income (at current prices) was \$ 17, 250.

Although there are only two people in my family, our monthly income is nearly 40% below the median figure in 2006. Individually, my mother does not receive stable income so her monthly income tends to be lower than the median monthly income of an employed individual of \$ 10, 000. In conclusion, my family's income is comparably low; especially the data was collected in 2006 which inflation has already been excluded. Education is counted as an essential factor determining social class as it's believed that

well-educated people can always get well-pay jobs with comfortable working environments.

As mentioned in the 2006 Population By-census report, people with higher educational attainment generally have higher income than less educated ones. Also, in the past few decades, only economically sufficient families could provide educations for their children. There are many middle-aged people nowadays do not have high-school qualifications. Thus, in the past few decades, the more educated a person was, the wealthier his/ her family would be. My mother did not finish high-school education while I have just started my university study. Finally, a very special factor---gender, is considered. ' Gender is a basis for social stratification. (Henslin, James, 2011) All of us in a family are both females. Even though people in modern world advocate gender equality, women still suffer from gender inequality. Stated in the report of the 2006 Population By-census, the median monthly income from main employment of working men was higher than that of working women by some 30% during 1996-2006. Other than income, clothing, right to divorce and education are restricted in some Middle East countries (e. g. Iran). Hong Kong seems to be a liberal city but there are still some deep-root traditions and thoughts that limit the social mobility of females.

Due to gender inequality, my mother was not allowed to attend high school and she is forced to receive lower pay comparing to her male colleagues with same working titles. To conclude, I would say gender serves as a force that aid pushing down my family's social status. After the considerations of all these factors, I would place my family as working class or sometimes lower class. In term of Marx's theory, my family would be the proletariat (workers).

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In term of Weber's theory which considers three components of social class, I would still place my family as working or lower class. 2) Prediction of my own social class when I am 40 years old and the possible difference between my current family social class position and the future: It is extremely hard to predict my own social position when I am 40 years old which will be approximately two decades later as our world is never predictable. Nonetheless, if everything reminds unchanged in our world, I will be a clinical psychologist or at least graduate with bachelor degree. Ideally, I will be working for the government as a professional with 'Iron Rice Bowl'. The salary I get will be higher than average.

According to the report on salary scale of common posts in the non-governmental organizations, the monthly salary of a clinical psychologist was \$ 30, 615 in 2009 which was 2 times higher than the median monthly income in 2006. In 20 years time, my mother will be retired hopefully and I will be the only financial support at home. My occupation, wealth, education level and income will be the main indicators to identify my social position in our society. According to Marx, I remain a proletariat who lacks of class consciousness as I do not perceive an occupation as a clinical psychologist as an exploited worker.

According to Wright, I may be on the level of managers or still workers. I guess I will not own any means of production or labor power but I hope I can still own control over investments or money capital (e. g. a flat unit). In short, from both Marx's and Wright's view, my social position will not differ a lot from my family's current social class position. However, I doubt that their views are relatively simplistic and out-dated so I prefer Weber's three

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components of social class (property, power and prestige). At the age of 40, as a professional, I may have a secretary which means I gain power on controlling my subordinates at work.

Also, prestige sounds more achievable as a professional with more respects. From his perspective, I may achieve vertical mobility and move to a higher-rank social position comparing to my family's current social class position. Generally, I believe being a clinical psychologist can upgrade myself from a lower/working class to lower middle class. However, the above assumptions are made under the circumstances that nothing has changed. In my own opinion, there are some essential factors that I have to consider. For examples, the prestige and income I will get for being a clinical psychologist may not be that much as in the past.

This is because studying in universities is very common; getting a university degree will be easier than the past. Potentially, there will be more clinical psychologists in Hong Kong and salaries will be lowered when there are sufficient supplies. (3) Considerations of all advantages and/or disadvantages my family's current social class position provides or poses in helping to determine the social class to which I see myself belonging when I am forty years old: First of all, I would like to state some of the disadvantages at the beginning.

Income is an important indicator determining class position. However, my mother's income can be very unstable (as a typical factor of local working class). She can earn quite a lot this month but earn nothing in the following month. A few years ago while there was a structural change in the industry that I have considered not to continue my study but to work in order to <https://assignbuster.com/social-stratification-personal-research-of-future-social-class/>

support my family's expenses. This kind of consideration may appear again if the economic condition is really bad.

Although the possibility is very low, income uncertainty can still block my sights from determining my future social class which is possibly determined by my education level. Also, social class is likely to be intergenerational so I am very likely to be part of the working/ lower class but not what I have expected in part (2). One significant advantage is that being a part of the lower/working class provides very strong motivation for me to study harder and move to the middle class rank in the future.

When being a part of the middle class becomes my goal, I can easily conclude what social position I will be in my 40s. References: (1) Thematic Report : Household Income Distribution in Hong Kong 2006 Population By-census http://www.statistics.gov.hk/publication/stat_report/population/B11200452006XXXXB0401.pdf (2) Salary Scale of Common Posts in the Non-governmental Organizations w. e. f 1. 4. 2009 <http://www.swd.gov.hk/doc/ngo/Salary%20Scale%20of%20Common%20Posts%20wef%201%204%202009.pdf> (3) Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach (Henslin, James, 2011)