

Ken Plummer, Sociology. The Basics, 2010. Chapter 7: Suffering inequalities.

1. Inequalities are inscribed into any society.
2. Differences are subject to moral evaluation.
3. So how are these rankings created and maintained (or changed)?
 - a. Outcome: Social exclusion ('otherness') and social stratification.
4. Hence the first thing for a sociologist to do is to map the hierarchies:
 - a. Who is excluded, who is the elite, what are the strata or layers?
 - i. **Exercise:** university: map the stratification (*work in groups*).
Sketch: the layers, the borders, mechanism of exclusion, mechanism of advancement.
5. Stratification systems:
 - a. Castes (based on birth, outlawed)
 - b. Slavery (and modern slavery)
 - c. Social class:
 - i. Karl Marx (economic criterion: relation to the means of production - capitalists vs. proletariat)
 - ii. Max Weber (intersection of economic class, prestige status and power).
 - d. Global poverty: 'the wretched of the earth' (Frantz Fanon)
6. Study of inequality: objective and subjective perspectives
 - a. 'Objective':
 - i. Examples of the dimensions:
 1. income and wealth,
 2. life expectancy and health,
 3. education and literacy,
 4. work and housing.
 - ii. Inequalities are hard to measure (Discussion: why?)
 - iii. Examples of measures:
 1. The world poverty line (by World Bank): \$1.90 a day
 2. Class system based on the registry of occupations
 3. Gini coefficient
 4. HDI (Human Development Index)
 - a. longevity – life expectancy at birth;
 - b. knowledge – adult literacy and enrolment in schooling;
 - c. decent standards of living – income per head
 - b. Subjective dimensions of inequalities:
 - i. Insecure lives
 - ii. Brutalised lives
 - iii. Shamed lives
 - iv. Invisible lives
 - v. Dehumanised lives
 - vi. Lives of resistance
7. 7 intersecting orders of inequalities: study of opportunities
 - a. Social orders (channels of opportunities) Supporting ideas and identities (discourses / positionalities)

i. 1 Class order: Classism and class consciousness

- advantaged (upper, rich)
- intermediate (middle),
- subordinate (lower, working-class) groups
- those who seem to fall outside the whole system (the underclass).

Class is reproducing itself.

ii. 2 Gender order: (and patriarchy) Sexism and gender identity

Sex vs. Gender

Measure: Gender Gap:

- (a) degree of economic participation;
- (b) level of educational attainment;
- (c) physical health, longevity and survival;
- (d) political activity, participation and empowerment

iii. 3 Racial formation: (ethnicity and race) Racialisation, racism and ethnic identity

iv. 4 Age stratification and generational orders: Ageism and generational self

v. 5 Nations: Nationalism and national identity

- Nation as imagined community

vi. 6 The sexual order: Heterosexism, homophobia and heteronormativity: sexual identity

vii. 7 The disability and health order: Sickness and 'disablement' ideologies: health/ ability identity

Stigmatization process

Different social definitions of a life stage as opposed to the biological process of aging.

Different historical situations of generations.

8. Identities as micro reflections of macro differences

- a. Where are we coming from?
- b. Who we are?
- c. Who we might becoming to be?

Marx: importance of consciousness

9. Ask yourself about what opportunities you have been given (or not given)?

- a. Of how your own life choices have been narrowed or widened?
- b. How have you been honoured and respected or shamed and treated with indifference?
- c. How have you been celebrated or stigmatised?
- d. How have you been in the mainstream of things – or banished to the margins?

10. Power

- a. Max Weber: power: 'the chance of men to realise their own will ... even against the resistance of others'
- b. Karl Marx: power: 'economic control'

the study of inequalities is about different access to resources

11. The resources of a stratified life

- a. • **Economic resources**: how much income, wealth, financial assets and inheritance do you have access to? How much does your work provide for your needs?
- b. • **Social resources**: how much support do you have from family, friends, community and networks?
- c. • **Cultural resources**: how much access do you have to the knowledge, information, skills, education of your society? (Over time, such 'skills' can become part of a person's very sense of being, 'in their body', through their qualifications and sense of self.)
- d. • **Symbolic resources**: how much access do you have to people giving you legitimacy and recognition; and privileging your life over others?
- e. • **Political resources**: how much autonomy do you have in your life? Are you able to control much of your day or do others control it for you?
- f. • **Bodily and emotional resources**: in what way does your body or feelings seem to limit or control your life? How far do others regulate your body?
- g. • **Personal resources**: how much has your own unique life and life history helped you generate personal skills for you to move easily in the world?

Exercise: *imagine an immigrant to Poland - discuss /her resources and possibilities to enhance them.*

12. The making of the 'other' (social exclusion)

a.

13. Exploitation - an outcome of inequalities

14. Violence - an ultimate outcome of inequalities

15. *Human social worlds tend to be unequal worlds*

16. Question of equality

a. *Human beings are bundles of needs, potentials, capabilities and differences which need appropriate social conditions in order to develop and flourish.*

b. human capabilities?

- i. to live a life
- ii. for health
- iii. bodily integrity
- iv. senses, imagination, and thought
- v. for emotions
- vi. for practical reason
- vii. for affiliation and recognition
- viii. the ability to play
- ix. control over one's environment
- x. ability to live with other species