

Title	Social Class Stereotypes.
Time	50 - 60 minutes with an optional 30 minutes for discussion / explanation
Preparation	It would be useful to prepare some material on theories of class (especially class identification, fragmentation, underclass and so forth) as the basis for further explanation / discussion. Some large sheets of paper and marker pens would be useful, but not strictly necessary. White board / flip chart.
Prior Knowledge	For this exercise students need only a basic knowledge of class categories (upper, middle, working for example).
Objective	<p>The exercise is designed to make students think about how and why people are categorised in terms of social class. Since this involves thinking about the indicators we can use to define class and categorise people in terms of class the exercise can also be used to show how the concept of class can be operationalised, both objectively and subjectively.</p> <p>It can lead to wide-ranging discussion about theories of class (Marxist, Weberian, etc.) or it can be focused on particular themes such as class cohesion and fragmentation, the New Right's use of the underclass concept and so forth.</p>
The Exercise	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Begin by asking your students to individually decide what class / group they believe they belong to. Ask them to also consider how they decided this (what indicators did they use - the area in which they live, parent's jobs, accent, the way they dress and so forth). Spend 10 minutes on this and then write their suggestions on the board / flip chart.2. Divide class into groups of 3 or 4 and ask them to decide and write down:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. What are the upper classes like? For example, where do they go? (e.g. opera, ballet), what do they do (work, leisure etc.). You may have to initially prompt some ideas.b. Do the same for the middle classes and working classes. <p>Allow 5 or 10 minutes for each class.</p>

3. When they have all finished, invite each group's suggestions in turn about the characteristics of each class and write them separately on the board. (10 minutes).

4. Compare the initial decision they made about their social class with the definitions they produced in their groups. This can lead to a number of possible discussion points. For example:

a. If some claim to define themselves as working class, but this does not match their suggestions about "what the working classes are like" you could lead into a discussion of class fragmentation (are there different types of working class?).

b. The characteristics used to define social class will probably involve both objective and subjective indicators. Which are most important (and why)? A discussion of the relative merits of Marxist and Weberian class scales could also be introduced here.

- This type of format can easily be adapted and applied to concepts such as gender, age and ethnicity.