Status and Social Class
From Isolation to Connection
Workshop 7

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This experiential workshop will explore the meaning and functions of social class in group. We will explore how status and social class in our patients and ourselves impacts the therapeutic process. The repression of our feelings about social class, its use as a resistance, and its effect on transference. countertransference, subgrouping, and impasses will be explored. It is recommended that participants go to the New York Times website and search for "Class Matters" and complete the metrics prior to attending the workshop.

Experiential-sharing of work experiences-didactic-demonstration

Learning Objectives

1. Specify the ways in which status and social class impact the therapeutic process.

2. Identify social class and status issues in yourself and your patients that facilitate or foreclose therapeutic possibilities.

3. Recommend paths to greater freedom and creativity in using the conflicts around class and status issues in group psychotherapy.

DSM OF CLASS

DSM II—Rich-Poor

If the popular number of classes is three, the number sociologists seem to favor is five:

DSM III

Upper
Upper middle
Middle
Lower middle
Lower

And trying to count the classes, some people simply give up, finding, like John Brooks in *Showing Off in America* (1981), that "in the new American structure there seem to be an almost infinite number of classes," or like the man in Boston asked about class there who said, "You have too many classes for me to count and name. . . . Hell! There may be fifteen or thirty." (He then added, like a good American, "Anyway, it doesn't matter a damn to me.")

My researches have persuaded me that there are nine classes in this country, as follows:

DSM IV

Top out-of-sight
Upper
Upper middle

Middle
High proletarian
Mid-proletarian
Low proletarian

Destitute
Bottom out-of-sight

One thing to get clear at the outset is this: it's not riches alone that defines these classes. "It can't be money," one working man says quite correctly, "because nobody ever knows that about you for sure." Style and taste and awareness are as important as money. "Economically, no doubt, there are only two classes, the rich and the poor," says George Orwell, "but socially there is a whole hierarchy of classes, and the manners and traditions learned by each class in childhood are not only very different but—this is the essential point—generally persist from birth to death. . . . It is . . . very difficult to escape, culturally, from the

How Class Works

While there are many characteristics that could be used to describe a person's class, among the most influential are the person's occupation, education, income and wealth. Below are different ways of looking at class using these factors, as well as an examination of how mobility has changed in recent decades. The fourth tab presents results from a poll conducted by The Times that asked people about class issues.

COMPONENTS OF CLASS | HOW CLASS BREAKS DOWN | INCOME MOBILITY | A NATIONWIDE POLL

One way to think of a person's position in society is in terms of four factors -- education, income, occupation and wealth (four commonly used criteria for gauging class).

MOVE OVER THE MENUS AT RIGHT TO SEE WHERE YOU FIT.

YOUR CHOICES

Occupation: None Selected
Education: None Selected
Income: None Selected
Wealth: None Selected

OCCUPATION	EDUCATION		INCOME	WEALTH
Select a Value	Select a Value		Select a Value	Select a Value
High Prestige	Doctorate degree		More than $200,000/year	More Than $50 Million
			$100,000	Up to $1 Million
	Bachelor's degree	TOP FIFTH		
				Up to $500,000
			$60,000	
	Some college	UPPER MIDDLE		
			$40,000	Up to $100,000
	High school graduate	MIDDLE		
				Up to $50,000
			$30,000	
		LOWER MIDDLE		Up to $10,000
				Up to $5,000
			$20,000	
	11th grade	BOTTOM FIFTH		
Low Prestige	No schooling completed		$10,000	

* Percentile rank is the percentage of the population that the selected value is equal to or greater than.

Sources: Income, education and occupation data from an analysis of 2000 and 2003 public-use microsample data from the U.S. Census Bureau by Andrew Beveridge and Susan Weber, Queens College Sociology Department; wealth data from an analysis by Edward N. Wolff, economics professor, New York University, of data from the 2001 Survey of Consumer Finances by the Federal Reserve Board

Archie Tse and Ben Werschkul/The New York Times

Hidden Rules Among Classes

	POVERTY	MIDDLE CLASS	WEALTH
POSSESSIONS	People.	Things.	One-of -a-kind objects, legacies, pedigrees.
MONEY	To be used, spent.	To be managed.	To be conserved, invested.
PERSONALITY	Is for entertainment. Sense of humor is highly valued.	Is for acquisition and stability. Achievement is highly valued.	Is for connections. Financial, political, social connections are highly valued.
SOCIAL EMPHASIS	Social inclusion of people he/she likes.	Emphasis is on self-governance and self-sufficiency.	Emphasis is on social exclusion.
FOOD	Key question: Did you have enough? Quantity important.	Key question: Did you like it? Quality Important.	Key question: Was it presented well? Presentation important.
CLOTHING	Clothing valued for individual style and expression of personality.	Clothing valued for its quality and acceptance into norm of middle class. Label important.	Clothing valued for its artistic sense and expression. Designer important.
TIME	Present most important. Decisions made for moment based on feelings or survival.	Future most important. Decisions made against future ramifications;	Traditions and history, most important. Decisions mode partially on basis of tradition and decorum.
EDUCATION	Valued and revered as abstract but not as reality.	Crucial for climbing success ladder and making money.	Necessary tradition for making and maintaining connections.
DESTINY	Believes in fate. Cannot do much to mitigate chance.	Believes in choice. Can change future with good choices now.	Noblesse oblige.
LANGUAGE	Casual register. Language is about survival.	Formal register. Language is about negotiation.	Formal register. Language is about networking.
FAMILY STRUCTURE	Tends to be matriarchal.	Tends to be patriarchal.	Depends on who has money.
WORLD VIEW	Sees world in terms of local setting	Sees world in terms of notional setting.	Sees world in terms of international view.
LOVE	Love and acceptance conditional based upon whether individual is liked.	Love and acceptance conditional and based largely upon achievement.	Love and acceptance conditional and related to social standing and connections.
DRIVING FORCES	Survival, relationships, entertainment.	Work, achievement.	Financial, political, social connections.
HUMOR	About people and sex.	About situations.	About social faux pas.

Source: Ruby Payne, A Framework for Understanding Poverty. Highlands, TX: aha! Process, Inc., 1996, pp. 42 - 43

Knowledge of the Hidden Rules of Social Class: A Questionnaire

Adapted from Ruby K. Payne's book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, 4th rev. ed. (2005), for an exercise developed by Patrick J. Ashton.

Purpose: To help you gain insight into the taken-for-granted knowledge needed to survive in various social classes.

Assignment: For each of the three questionnaires below, place a check mark in front of each item that you definitely know how to do-- right now, today, at this very minute. Be honest. If you are the least bit unsure, do not check the item. If you don't have children, use yourself and your siblings as a reference group.

Surviving in Poverty

- ❑ I know which churches and sections of town have the best rummage sales.
- ❑ I know where the nearest food bank is and when it is open.
- ❑ I know which grocery stores' garbage bins can be accessed for thrown-away food.
- ❑ I know how to get someone out of jail.
- ❑ I know how to physically fight and can defend myself if necessary.
- ❑ I know how a person can get a gun even if they have a police record.
- ❑ I know how to keep my clothes from being stolen at the Laundromat.
- ❑ I know what problems to look for in a used car.
- ❑ I know how to live without a checking account.
- ❑ I know how to get by without electricity and without a phone.
- ❑ I know how to use a knife as scissors.
- ❑ I can entertain a group of friends with my personality and my stories.
- ❑ I know what to do when I don't have the money to pay my bills.
- ❑ I know how to move my residence in less than a day.
- ❑ I know how to feed 8 people for 5 days on $100.
- ❑ I know how to get and use food stamps.
- ❑ I know where the free medical clinics are and when they are open.
- ❑ I am very good at trading and bartering.
- ❑ I know how to get around without a car.
- ❑ I know what day of the month welfare and social security checks arrive.

Functioning in the Middle Class

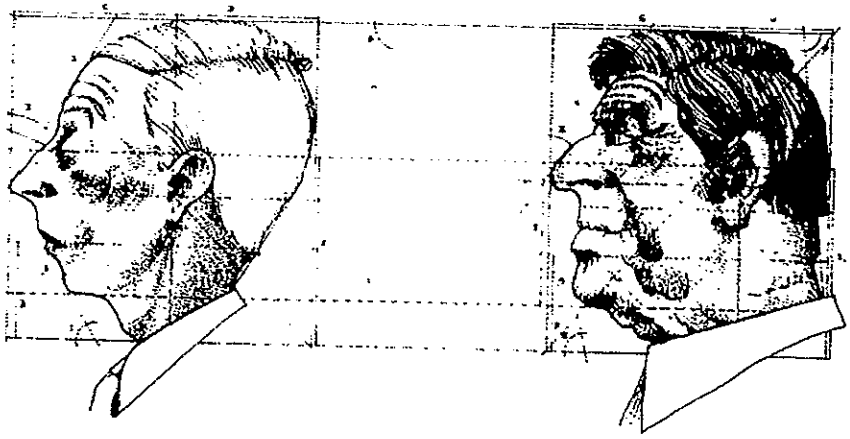
- ❑ I know how to get my children signed up for Little League, soccer, piano lessons, etc.
- ❑ I know how to properly set a table.
- ❑ I know which stores are most likely to carry the clothing brands my family wears.
- ❑ My children know the best name brands in clothing.
- ❑ I know how to order in a nice restaurant.
- ❑ I know how to use a credit card, checking account, and savings account.
- ❑ I know how to use an ATM card, and I know where the nearest ATM machines are.
- ❑ The children in my family expect to go to college.
- ❑ I understand term life insurance, disability insurance, house and floodinsurance.
- ❑ I know how to get the best interest rates on a mortgage or new car loan.
- ❑ I understand what a pension annuity is and how it works.
- ❑ I understand the difference among the principal, interest, and escrow statements on my house payment.
- ❑ I know how to help my children with their homework.
- ❑ If my children have a problem at school, I do not hesitate to contact the teacher or principal.
- ❑ I know how to decorate the house for different holidays.
- ❑ I know how to get a library card and how to check out books at the public library.
- ❑ I know where to go and register to vote and where my local polling place is.
- ❑ I repair items in my house immediately when they break or I know a repair service and call it.
- ❑ I use at least two of the following on a regular basis: laptop, cell phone, DVD player, mp3 player, digital camera, social networking site(s).
- ❑ I know how to use various tools in the garage or basement.

Functioning in the Upper Class

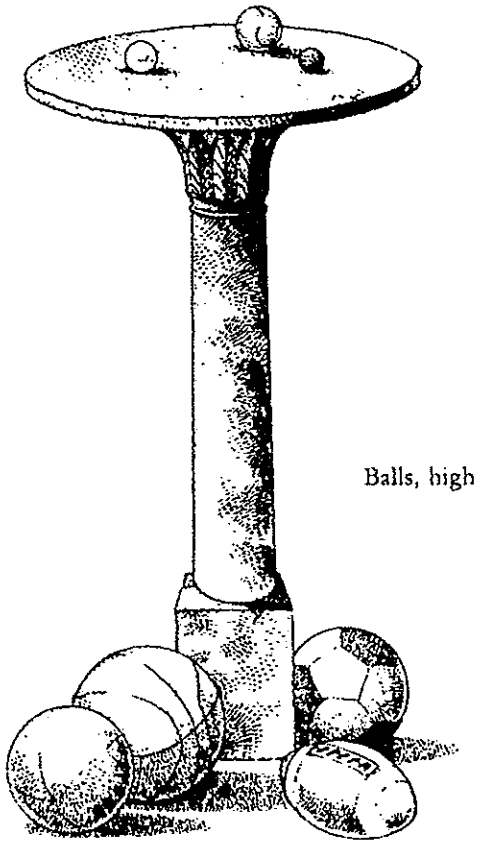
- ❑ I can read a menu in French, English, and another language.
- ❑ I have several favorite restaurants in different parts of the country or in different countries.
- ❑ I know how and where to hire an interior decorator to identify the appropriate themes and items with which to decorate my residence.
- ❑ I know how and where to hire domestic help, including maids, caterers, and gardeners.
- ❑ I can name my regular financial advisor, lawyer, and barber or hair stylist.
- ❑ I have at least two residences which are staffed and maintained.
- ❑ I know how to ensure confidentiality and loyalty from my domestic staff.
- ❑ I have at least two "screens" that keep people from me whom I do not wish to see.
- ❑ I frequently vacation in foreign countries.
- ❑ I fly in my own plane, the company plane, jet timeshare, or first class.
- ❑ I belong to at least two exclusive, members-only private clubs.
- ❑ I know how to enroll my children in the preferred private schools.
- ❑ I know how to host parties that "key" people attend.
- ❑ I am on the boards of at least two charities.
- ❑ I know the hidden rules of the Junior League, the country club, and other private organizations.
- ❑ My personal phone book contains the unlisted numbers of at least a dozen well-known people.
- ❑ I am familiar with personal security systems and devices.
- ❑ I have a favorite artist whom I support by buying his or her work (originals, not prints).
- ❑ I know how to read a corporate financial statement and the stock reports in the daily paper.
- ❑ I can easily converse about the "best" wines, art, designers, resorts, etc. My clothing, personal items, and residential furnishing were created by the most exclusive designers.

Privileged Childhood	Privileged Adulthood
Under-Privileged Childhood	Under-Privileged Adulthood

Place yourself in one of the above categories and discuss it with your subgroup. Focus on the type of power relationships that you were aware of between groups.

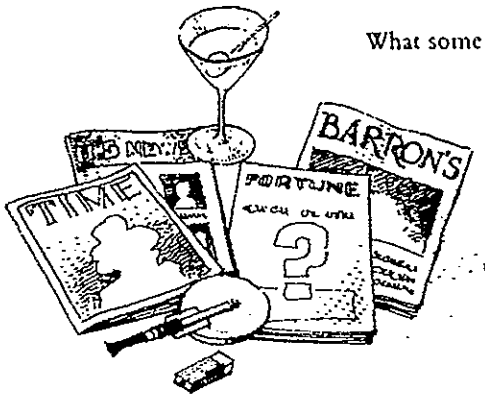


Upper-middle and prole profiles
(after Molloy)



Balls, high and low

What some of the classes like to take in



upper-middle

middle

prole

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DAY JOB

Street vender.

I work a coffee-and-doughnut pushcart in lower Manhattan. The day for me starts at 5 A.M. That's when I meet the truck that comes to unload the cart on the street. Usually, the gas is already lit and the water is heating up. I can start making the coffee as soon as the truck leaves. Then, later, another little truck comes around with boxes of pastry.

The first customers start trickling in at six. From seven until eleven, it's a big flood of people. I go through about ten or twelve pounds of coffee in a morning. After that slows down, I clean up and then usually sit down on the milk crate. Maybe look at the paper. After the lunch hour people come again, although not like the morning, and then I start closing everything down. About two-thirty or so, the truck comes back and loads up the cart.

Having to deal with the public, it's pretty much constant working. But it's an O.K. living. I would be lucky if I owned my own cart, but the cart licenses are expensive. And it's really hard work. You're out there in the freeze of the winter and the heat of the summer. It's also pretty unsafe doing this. Sometimes you get held up early in the morning. I protected myself with a pot of boiling water one time. A guy showed me something sticking up out of his pocket—it might have been a pipe, I don't know. I had fifteen dollars in my money bag. I wasn't about to give it to this guy. I picked up the bucket of water and heaved it at him. It was wintertime and he had a big army coat on, but he leaped back and took off.

The worst thing is the customers, almost all of whom are appallingly hateful, horrible people. I mostly work Wall Street, and the worst class of people are in the tan raincoats and business suits. The stockbrokers and people who work in the offices are just horrendous.

And they're all very particular about their coffee. You gotta put your little cream in, your sugar, however you make it just so. It makes it a drag to be selling coffee. They stick their heads right into the cart and tell you what to do. I'm always feeling like I want to punch their head back out again. I've gotten to where I can't stand people, especially the yuppies and the businesspeople. I really loathe them, so much so that I can't watch TV, because the male newscasters look just like the customers. You know? They have that haircut. Just the sound, the click and scrape of a briefcase being put down when they go to get their stupid, fat wallet out, makes me cringe. And they make this ugly gesture, reaching in between their legs where their coat is buttoned to pull back their coat and get their wallet, usually out of their front pocket. The women are just as bad, wearing their stupid running shoes with their little female business suits. They are just hateful.

—Interviewed by Dana Rouse

STEPHEN KRONINGER

Blackwell, D. (1998). Comment on paper by L. Stork. ***Group Analysis, 31,*** **116-120**

It is commonly said that, in England, class is where you come from. In the USA class is where you have got to....

As George Bernard Shaw remarked, 'All professions are conspiracies against the laity' (*The Doctor's Dilemma,* 1934)....

For me, as the son of a trade union organizer, to identify myself as middle class by virtue of my status as psychotherapist, university graduate, associate editor of a professional journal or whatever, is not only to signal a change of culture or to claim a success in upward mobility but, more importantly, it is an act of betrayal. It is not an oedipal triumph in going beyond and achieving more than my father, it is in fact a rejection of that conflict, a refusal to aim for the same goal, a denial of the very identity and relationship upon which my oedipal rivalry can be based; a denial that I am, in fact, his son. In that moment I am not Oedipus but Othello—a stranger in an alien land, seduced into destroying the thing he loves, and bereft of an authentic identity, identified only with the oppressor. It is this particular alienation which is, as far as I know, recognized nowhere within the psychotherapeutic discourse....

I drew attention [in my article on racism] to the problems of being the only member of the oppressed group, of the need for the conductor to initiate analysis of these issues of oppression and the way in which, in the context of oppression, there tended to develop a competition for 'victim' status. I think it is significant that I made those points in relation to identities rooted in phenomena other than class, the phenomenon that I personally experience most immediately. Indeed, my one effort to address the class issue in a conference presentation remains unwritten-up and unpublished. To speak on behalf of black people who are my clients and friends, and to own up as white person with a racist unconscious is difficult enough. But to speak from my own specific class identity, to struggle with an internal and an external conflict has proved even more so. I am only too aware of the readiness with which such claims are interpreted as a chip on the shoulder, an antediluvian world view, a paranoid-schizoid split, an outdated and rigid ideological position and such other labels as the psychotherapeutic and contemporary political discourses have available to them to defend themselves against such problematics....

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Go to the New York Times web site and search the site for: "Class Matters." This will bring you to an excellent interactive site on Social class.

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