

Student and Campus SES: Issues and Applications

Indiana Student Affairs Association
Indianapolis, October 2003

Will Barratt, Ph.D., Indiana State University Department of Counseling
willbarratt@indstate.edu

Leslie Jaworski, DePauw University

Amy Welch, DePauw University

Proposal

SES is composed of social status (prestige) and economic status and is an important source of identity, satisfaction and stress in people's lives, and an important campus characteristic. SES is an important student characteristic and campus reality which can complicate other diversity issues such as gender, and ethnicity. The goals of this presentation are to present research, information and stories about student and campus SES and to introduce the issues and applications of SES on campus. Skills in identifying SES issues, individual and campus SES bias, and techniques for managing SES differences in student affairs will be presented. (<http://wbarratt.indstate.edu/isaa2003>)

Learning objective and outcomes:

Participants will learn basic information

- about SES
- about SES issues on campus
- about their own SES
- about applications of SES concepts and research to student affairs practice.

Socio Economic Status (SES)

SES is traditionally composed of three parts, income, occupation and education. It must be noted that these are not independent ideas; more education typically leads to increased income and to a more prestigious occupation.

Prestige is an important idea used to describe both education and occupation. Prestige is a social construct based on what large numbers of people believe.

Prestige occupation rankings have remained largely unchanged over the years based on research asking people what they believe.

Prestige educational institution rankings have remained largely unchanged over the years based largely on research asking people what they believe. In spite of US News and World Reports rankings, institutional prestige rankings are largely data free or are based on data of questionable validity.

Educational Attainment of Adults in the US

Graduate or professional degree	8.9%
Bachelor's degree	15.5%
Associate degree	6.3%
Some college, no degree	21%
High-school diploma	28.6%
Some high school, no diploma	12.1%
8 th grade or less	7.5%

Educational Attainment HS Diploma 80.4%

Educational Attainment College Degree 24.2%

Chronicle Almanac Census data for adults over 25 in 2000

Educational Attainment HS Diploma 84%

Educational Attainment 4 year degree 29%

United States Census (2000), Educational Attainment in the United States

(Update) March 2000, Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office

High School Graduation Rate 71%

Green, J. (2002). High School Graduation Rates in the United States (Revised 2002). New York: Black Alliance for Educational Options.

International Educational Attainment: Percentage of the population in G-7 countries that had completed secondary and higher education, ages 25-34: 1998

United States	28%
Japan	24%
Canada	23%
United Kingdom	17%
France	15%
Germany	14%
Italy	9%

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 2001*, NCES 2001-072, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001.

Income in the US - United States Census National Income Norms, in 2001 dollars (N=74,340)

5% of US Families make more than \$164,104

20% of US Families make more than \$94,150

40% of US Families make more than \$62,500

60% of US Families make more than \$41,127

80% of US Families make more than \$24,000

US Census Bureau, Table F-1. Income Limits for Each Fifth and Top 5 Percent of Families (All Races): 1947 to 2001, retrieved from

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/income/histinc/f01.html>

Poverty Rate (Families earning below \$18,104 in 2000-2001)

US: 11.5%

Indiana: 8.5%

US Census, See also <http://www.census.gov/hhes/income/histinc/incfamdet.html>

Average Tuition and Fees

US:

At public 4-year institutions \$3,746

At public 2-year institutions \$1,379

At private 4-year institutions \$16,287

Indiana:

At public 4-year institutions \$4,402

At public 2-year institutions \$2,121

At private 4-year institutions \$16,973

Chronicle Almanac 2003-2004

Social Classes in the US, Income, and Wealth – SES is NOT income

Upper Class (those who have wealth – typically over USD \$10,000,000)

Upper Middle Class (income in the top 20%)

Middle Middle Class (60% - 80% income level)

Lower Middle Class (40% - 60% income level)

Working Class (20% - 40% income level)

Lower Class (The long-term unemployed and lower 20% in income level)

SES, Status and Referent Groups

We all have an SES for occupational prestige, educational attainment and income based on a national comparison and we also have a status based on a local referent group. A housekeeping supervisor may have high status among her work, church, and neighborhood referent groups but nationally her SES may be low.

	Occupational Prestige	Educational Attainment	Income
National Referent Group	Hi Middle Low	Hi Middle Low	Hi Middle Low
Local Referent Group	Hi Middle Low	Hi Middle Low	Hi Middle Low

SES of Origin and Attained SES

The Hollingshead Four Factor Measure of SES is the classic simple measure of SES relying on parental education and occupation. While most people learn their SES attitudes and values at home with their families, some people change their SES through education and work. Students

who attend college graduate and enter prestige occupations but whose parents did not have a higher SES than their families of origin. This difference in SES may be a source of tension within the family, and for the individual who has risen in social class. It takes 2 to 3 generations to change SES and education, now more available than ever, is one way to rise in SES.

SES and Mental Health Issues – Summary of Research Findings

1. Sources of stress and anxiety for different social classes
 - a. Lower socioeconomic status individuals-more relational disruptions, emotionally fragmented
 - b. Benefits of being upper class-freedom
 - c. Problems of being lower class-powerlessness
2. Educational aspirations and achievement motivation for different social classes
 - a. Social class seems to operate by limiting the amount of resources afforded lower socioeconomic individuals by the nature of their social and economic contexts.
 - b. Research on social class has long argued that people of different social classes vary in their importance placed on autonomy and conformity in children.
3. Displacement from family and town of origin
 - a. Tension between the classes-one's social class is considered a reflection of one's motivation and effort
 - b. "Cultural realignment"
 - c. Moving up or down creates dissonance based on issues other than social status
4. Social distribution of depression:
 - a. depression is repeatedly shown to vary in relation to socioeconomic status indicating that low socioeconomic status may be a precipitant for depressive symptoms in a variety of ethnic/racial/cultural groups
5. Examination of advice giving as a therapeutic intervention:
 - a. it has been found that persons in the upper range of socioeconomic status seem to prefer advice couched in the form of a leading question, whereas persons in the lower range seemed comfortable with a more explicit professional opinion
6. Social status and social support:
 - a. research suggests that lower SES individuals may experience social relationships of lesser quality
7. Personal resources and SES:
 - a. it has been found that a greater sense of mastery is associated with reduced risk of psychological distress and depression, with or without exposure to life stress
 - b. research indicates that variations in mastery or perceived causal relevance arise at least partially from social and economic conditions within which individuals are located
 - c. research suggests that lower class status prevent the acquisition and maintenance of a sense of mastery
8. Self-esteem and SES:
 - a. research has found that positive relationship exists between self-esteem and social class
 - b. studies suggest that lower social class status has been shown to be associated with decreased self-esteem

9. SES and mental health disorders:
 - a. research indicates that low income and low SES are associated with higher rates of mental disorder
 - b. it has been found that women in financially strained circumstances, who also assume responsibility for young children, are more likely to experience symptoms of depression
 - c. research suggests that psychopathology is at least 2.5 times more prevalent in the lowest social class than in the highest social class
 - d. studies suggest that mental health problems for which persons from lower SES are particularly at risk include: depression, alcohol abuse or dependence and schizophrenia

Resources

Bettie, J. (2002). Exceptions to the rule: Upwardly mobile white and Mexican American high school girls. *Gender & Society, 16*, 403-422.

Blustein, D. L., Chaves, A. P., Diemer, M. A., Gallagher, L. A., Marshall, K. G., Sirin, S., & Bhati, K. S. (2002). Voices of forgotten half: The role of social class in the school-to-work transition. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 49*, 311-323.

Cheung, C. K., Rudowicz, E., Graeme, L., Xiao, D. Y., & Kwan, A. S. F. (2001, Dec). Critical thinking among university students: Does the family background matter? *College Student Journal, 35*, 21-40.

Kozol, J. (1991). *Save inequalities: Children in America's schools*. New York: Harper Collins.

Payne, Ruby, (2001) *Framework for Understanding Poverty*, aha! Process Inc., Highlands, TX.

Ross, J. (1995). Social class tensions within the families. *The American Journal of Family Therapy, 23*, 338-350.

Weinger, S. (2000). Opportunities for career success: Views of poor and middle-class children. *Children and Youth Services Review, 22*, 13-35.

Xiao, H. (2000, Dec). Class, gender, and parental values in the 1990s. *Gender & Society, 14*, 785-803.