

Social classes: theory and practice of its research

Summary

In this article a synthesis is made articulating theory and practice in research on Social Classes. Initially, different approaches to social class are indicated; Then, different conceptions about it are shown and a comparison is made between them. Next, paradigms in social science research applicable to social class research are shown. Subsequently, how to measure social classes and measurement of social classes in peripheral countries are analyzed, as well as predominant paradigm, methodology and methodological tools in social class research in a peripheral one, Colombia. Later, some methodological instruments (questionnaires) to measure social class are shown and compared some of them. As conclusion, there is a diversity of approaches and conceptions to understand social class, as well as a plurality of paradigms, methodologies, and methodological instruments to investigate it; but there is no one that subsumes all the others.

1. Introduction

The first conceptualization of Social Class, beyond its description, was proposed by Adam Smith in 1776 in his book about the wealth of nations (Smith, 1990). Already in the 19th century, various authors such as Claude-Henri Saint-Simon De Rouvroy, Robert Owen, David Ricardo, Friedrich Engels, and Karl Marx dealt with it from diverse conceptions. Until present days these conceptions have evolved and, also, other different conceptions have been proposed. The two predominant approaches are from Marx and Weber.

Social Class is the single most relevant category to analyze social stratification, which is also examined through categories like gender, stratum, ethnicity, and prestige. Individual insertion in the social productive process or in the market is the main way to determine social class, and one relevant aspect of a particular insertion is that it entails different life opportunities. On the other hand, understanding social classes is important because it allows a deeper understanding of studied society structure and dynamics.

One first question would be: Is scientific research on social class possible? To do this, it is essential to demarcate scientific research on social class from the ideological debate in which social class is immersed. Regarding scientific research on social class, there are conceptual frameworks, methodologies, and methodological instruments to conduct it. This article is intended to show some of them.

Ideology is the “set of fundamental ideas that characterizes the thinking of a person, group or time, of a cultural, religious or political movement, etc.” (Real Academia Española, 2001); Therefore, it is clear that an ideological debate on social class involves, from participating actors, different world perspectives, positions, and interests, irreducible to each other, as well as diverse visions to understand and investigate it.

Differentiate between research and ideological debate on social class is essential since this construct¹ is polysemic and, frequently, in the ideological debate it is approached from different perspectives that do not have substantive elements in common beyond referring to the same name; and it falls into a stereotyped, intransigent, and stigmatizing discourse, associated with preconceptions, resentments, and fears. Often, ideological debate on this construct turns into defense and/or praise of certain configurations of power in society and of the underlying interests of certain social groups.

This text is developed in the following order: it begins analyzing social class approaches and conceptions, and compare these latter; also, it shows paradigms in social science research applicable to social class research. Then, it indicates how to measure social class, and debates about social class measurement in peripheral countries using instruments from central countries, and it presents predominant paradigm, methodology and methodological tool in social class research in Colombia. Afterwards, some questionnaires to measure social class are shown. Finally, discussion and conclusions are drafted.

This paper is a product from the doctoral thesis "Spousal Violence, Social Capital and Social Class in the commune of Belén, Medellín-2013" (Sarasti-Vanegas, 2016).

2. Social Class Approaches

Social Class as a construct has different ways of understanding, that have been classified into the "gradational" and relational approaches.

In the "gradational" approach, there is a strand that calibrates social classes according to a single criterion (income, educational level, etc.), as well as a strand that calibrates it from several variables that are synthesized in one or various categories.

¹ Construct: "Theoretical construction to understand a specific problem" (Real Academia Española, 2001). "Something built by the mind, such as: a theoretical entity ... a hypothesis or concept of work" (Merriam-Webster, 1996).

On the other hand, in the relational approach, the essential difference between the different ways of understanding social class is what kind of social relations is taken as the basis to make this classification. Social class to Marxist and neo-Marxist conceptions are objectively defined by the production social relations; whereas, to Weberian and Neoweberian conceptions they are defined by the market and labor relations and; for Durkheimian conception, they are defined by relations based on the technical division of labor (Fresneda-Bautista, 2012).

3. Conceptions on Social Class

Analysis of Social Class is a relevant area of research to understand the social structure and dynamics and when doing this, it must be borne in mind which theory of Social Class is used. In mercantile societies, Social Class analysis explores in individuals and their families interconnection between their positions, defined by labor relations in the labor market and in production units, with life opportunities, social identities they adopt, and social values and interests they pursue (Goldthorpe & Marshall, 1992).

Social class continues to be important to explain, partially, social changes in contemporary societies (Scott, 2002). Social Class analysis applied to understand specific social aspects dynamics, among which are social inequities and health-disease phenomena, allows us to establish whether there is some association between them.

Social Class construct is understood from different conceptions, none of which can subsume the others, since they are based on different conceptual frameworks. This must be borne in mind, above all, because the debate on this construct and interpretations about the social structure and dynamics based on it frequently becomes an ideological debate, in which from the set of fundamental ideas that characterizes one or another conception is intended to analyze and frequently discredit interpretations from other conceptions.

The following are different conceptions about Social Class construct:

3.1. Marxist conception

Karl Marx defined social classes in modern society, based on the capitalist system of production, according to the type of income and its source. Thus, he defined three large social groups: workers, capitalists, and landlords; whose type of income was, respectively, salary, profit (surplus value), and ground rent and whose source of income was, respectively, exploitation of its labor power, its capital, and its territorial property. He also recognized that between these classes there were intermediate and transition phases that did not make divisions so clear (Marx, 1987).

In Marxist conception, Social Classes arise from interdependent economic relations between people and are determined by the social forms of property, possession of goods, work, and the relations between these groups through production, distribution, and consumption of goods, services, and information. They are expressed in occupations distribution, income, wealth, education, and social status. Their central component is the asymmetry in economic exploitation, where resources owners (for example, capital) gain economically from work or effort of non-owners who work for them (Krieger, 2001); that is to say, appropriation of surplus value by owners.

Thus, Social Classes are based on relationships occurring in the labor market, according to individual insertion in the production process. In the labor market some people buy the work of others and assume a certain degree of authority and control over them; others are self-employed and do not buy or sell their workforce and; also, others sell their labor power, whereby they place themselves under the authority of employer; in addition, there are those "excluded" from any employment relationship (Rose & Harrison, 2010).

3.1.1. Marxist conception in current Latin-American Social Medicine

The Latin American movement of Social Medicine, retaking the Marxist conception, considers that social classes are characterized by different ways of life, each one with typical patterns of work, daily life, and family in the sphere of consumption, as well as, with organization-specific forms, political activity, culture, subjectivity construction and ecological relationships (Breilh, 1989).

This explanation of social classes origin considers them to be determined by subject location, individual and collective, in the production system, which generates specific relationships in production means, specific roles in work organization, and modes and specific proportions to receive the social wealth that is produced.

In this conception, to operationalize the social class concept (Breilh, 1989) it has been used indicators to occupational category (based on occupation), production means ownership, and work process control degree (based on the capacity of occupation in charge of productive process); wherewith, 10 social fractions are created, namely: middle class (wealthy, poor), small producer (artisan, merchant, farmer), businessmen, workers, sub-wage earners, retirees, and military.

3.2. Weberian conception

Max Weber defined as social classes: 1) the proletariat as a whole, so much more as the working process is more automatic; 2) the petty bourgeoisie; 3) the intelligentsia (Vanguard or intellectual elite) without property and professional experts (technicians, commercial or other "employees"; bureaucrats); 4) the owners class and the privileged (Weber, 1964).

Max Weber understood as a class any human group in an equal class situation; which, he defined as the set of typical probabilities of provision of goods, external position, and personal destiny that derive from a certain economic order, from magnitude and nature of disposition power (or lack thereof) over goods and services and from ways of its applicability to obtain revenue or income (Weber, 1964).

This conception defines, among these human groups, some as the owner class, since the differences of property in its favor are the main determinant of their class situation; while he defines other groups as a lucrative class since the probabilities of valuation of their goods and services in the market determine their class situation.

In addition, each group class can be positively or negatively privileged. Thus, the positively privileged owners class possesses a monopoly of buying high-cost consumer

objects, of sales, of wealth formation probabilities (through unconsumed surpluses or by savings), or class privileges (of education).

These positively privileged owners' classes are typically rentiers (of slaves, lands, mines, owners of labor facilities and apparatus or ships), creditors (of cattle, crops, or money), or securities rentiers. Whereas the negatively privileged property classes are typically: the serfs, the classless, the debtors, and the poor. Likewise, he understood as middle classes the layers that are between these classes, and that equipped with property or with educational qualities derive their income from them (Weber, 1964).

For its part, the positively privileged lucrative class is the one that possesses the monopoly of directing the production of goods, concerning lucrative ends to its own members; as well as it possesses assurance of lucrative opportunities by influencing the economic policy of both political and other associations. The positively privileged lucrative classes are typically: entrepreneurs (merchants, shipowners, industrialists, agricultural entrepreneurs, bankers, financiers and, in certain circumstances, "liberal professions" with skills or training of preferential value (lawyers, doctors, artists)); in the same way, workers with monopolistic qualities (own or acquired).

The negatively privileged for-profit classes are typically: workers (skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled, or braceros). Between them are, also as "middle classes", peasants and independent artisans. In addition, frequently: civil servants (public and private), "liberal professions" and skill workers (Weber, 1964).

According to the Weberian approach, social stratification given by social classes leads to social inequities due to individual differential position in the market and, especially, in the occupational division of labor, which leads to different life opportunities for them. and their families.

Thus, social stratification" ... refers to social inequalities that can be attributed to how society is organized, to its socio-economic structure... in market economies, it is market position and, especially position in the labor occupational division fundamental to generate social inequalities. Individuals' and families' life chances are largely determined

by their positions in the market and occupation is their main indicator; the occupational structure is the backbone of the stratification system". (Harrison & David, 2006).

3.3. Durkheimian conception

Émile Durkheim stated that: "The classes or castes institution constitutes an organization of the labor division, and it is a closely regulated organization" (Durkheim, 1967). Thus, to the Durkheimian conception, Social Class is understood considering individuals and human groups' detailed locations within labor occupational division; which creates homogeneous effects in their lives; wherewith, highly disaggregated categories are obtained within a stratification system.

From a neo-Durkheimian position, it is argued that search for large social classes cannot be taken as a founding principle of class analysis, because in contemporary societies they no longer exist as they were previously conceived, but rather, the focus should be directed to the local level where grouping at the disaggregated level of occupational associations that emerge around functional niches in the division of labor is more deeply institutionalized (Grusky & Galescu, 2005).

3.4. Bourdieuiana Conception

Bourdieu argues that social class is a system of capital properties (economic, cultural, social, symbolic) and not a single property based on possession of only one (Castellanos-Obregón, 2010); his social class theory is a multidimensional conception of social space (Weininger, 2005). According to Bourdieu, social class is given by a multidimensional conformation of opportunities and disposition of actors according to a particular configuration of capital resources (economic, cultural, social, and symbolic) that confer differential power (Erik Olin Wright, 2005).

To Pierre Bourdieu, from a scientific point of view, social classes do not exist in a real, substantial, and empirical way, as they are predominantly assumed, but rather located in a social space, which is multidimensional. They are empirically apprehended through the main differentiation factors that occur in a given social universe, which are the

powers or forms of capital used by agents or groups of agents in the competition (struggle) to appropriate scarce goods of such a social universe. The distribution form of the various types of capital constitutes the structure of this social universe and they are the expression of the properties that give strength and power to their holders and, therefore, give them profit (Bourdieu, 2000).

Bourdieu considers that the fundamental social powers are, in order of primacy: Economic Capital, in its various forms; Cultural Capital (or Informational), in its various types and later, two forms of capital, closely related to each other, the Social Capital and the Symbolic Capital. Social Capital, according to Bourdieu, is the resources that are based on connections and group membership; while Symbolic Capital is the form that different types of capital take once they are perceived and recognized as legitimate (Bourdieu, 2000).

To Bourdieu, agents are distributed in the multidimensionality of social space, they are located in three dimensions: a first one, according to the global volume of capital (economic, cultural (informational), social, symbolic) that they possess; in a second dimension, according to the composition of their capital (relative weight of various types of capital in the totality of their capital, especially economic and cultural ones) and; in a third dimension, according to evolution in time of volume and composition of their capital, that is, according to their trajectory in social space (Bourdieu, 2000).

Such agents and groups of agents distribution in social space multidimensionality places them in a position and in a particular area in this space, which gives them their situation or class; Therefore, situation or class is determined by its relative position in such multidimensional space determined by values of aforementioned dimensions; "... In summary: constructed classes can be characterized in a certain way as agents groups that, by occupying similar positions in the social space (that is, in the distribution of powers), are subject to similar conditions of existence and conditioning factors and, as a result, they are endowed with similar dispositions that lead them to develop similar practices" (Bourdieu, 2000).

3.5. Neoclassical economics conception

For this conception, social classes are based on the rent concept that generates wealth; whose foundation is property rights. This rent determines living conditions and, rent distribution creates social class exploitation that can lead to collective action (Sørensen, 2005); thus, social classes are defined by property rights on assets and resources that produce economic resources (Fresneda-Bautista, 2012).

According to this conception, classes can only exist when there are market imperfections that create rent, which can be captured by some groups of actors and not by others; in addition, it states that they would disappear in a market of perfect competition and with complete information (Erik Olin Wright, 2005).

3.6. Conceptions based on domination and subordination

Another way to understand social classes is by defining them through domination and subordination relations (Fresneda-Bautista, 2012). In this trend, Lenski bases social classes on power and prestige; while, Dahrendorf bases them on authority level and not on their wealth degree (Mann, 2008).

To Lenski, social class occurs in a multidimensional space; Thus, this author states that in the structure of human groups there are normally parallel vertical hierarchies that are usually imperfectly correlated with each other, instead of having a single position in a one-dimensional hierarchy.

In this multidimensional space, social class becomes a series of positions in a set of vertical hierarchies (for example income, education, occupation, religion, ethnicity, race, gender, age, etc.); related through a non-vertical dimension, consistency; which gives individual or family status (Lenski, 1954) and, that can have different degrees.

Thus, certain individuals or families have high consistency (status crystallization) when they are consistently high or low in different vertical hierarchies; while, other individuals or families may be at high levels in certain vertical hierarchies, while, at low levels in other vertical hierarchies (status inconsistency), leading them to ambiguities that tend

to generate social tension and stress in their social interaction, as well as, to influence their political behavior to pressure social changes, in their personality development, their daily interactions, stress reactions and it favors them to recruit under revolutionary leadership (McNair, 2004).

On his part, Ralf Dahrendorf states that social classes are collectivities of individuals, organized or disorganized, who have in common manifest or latent interests that arise from or are related to the authority structure of imperatively coordinated associations. Because they have manifest and latent interests, social classes are always groups in conflict.

According to Dahrendorf, authority is the most general and most significant social relationship; thus, power and authority are irreducible factors from which social relations associated with private or communal property can be derived (Dahrendorf, 1959). Therefore, the property is only one of many types of authority, but not the only one (Fonseca T., 1960). Dahrendorf sees social structure as arrangements of life chances, which shape social classes. These life opportunities are a function of "options" and "ties"; the former refers to the choice opportunities available to individuals and, the latter, to the links that unite individuals to society (McNamee, 1982).

3.7. Comparison between different Social Class conceptions

In general, Social Class classifications share the common idea that, in market economies, position in the market, especially position in the occupational division of labor, is fundamental to social inequalities generation. Thus, the life opportunities of individuals and families are largely determined by their position in the labor market; occupation is taken as its central indicator, which means that occupational structure is seen as the backbone of the social stratification system (Rose & Harrison, 2010).

Different perspectives on social class raise diverse conceptual emphases and different responses to issues such as social conflicts, unequal distribution of assets and their historical variations, subjective experiences, life opportunities, and emancipation. To Marxist perspective, the explanatory key to these issues is in the capital-labor

relationship; whereas, to Weberian perspective it is in the social and cultural hierarchy, as well as, in differences historical variation and; on the other hand, to Bourdieu's perspective, capitals (economic, cultural, social and symbolic) explain lifestyles and opportunities differences (Castellanos-Obregón, 2010).

For its part, while to Marxism and neo-Marxism (which includes Hegelian Marxism, Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, Analytical Marxism, and French Structural Marxism) the central concern is to understand social classes through the process of exploitation of certain classes over others, to Weberian tradition it is to understand them from economic opportunities of people, originated in relationships that occur within the labor markets and the work organization.

4. Paradigms in social science research applicable to social class research

There are different paradigms in social sciences scientific research, that can be defined according to how the researcher conceives knowledge and reality nature, her/his relationship with the knowledge she/he generates, and how constructs it (Guba, 1990).

In quantitative approaches, Positivism conceives nature as an objective reality independent of thought, directed by laws, some of them causal, and mechanisms of absolute character, that can be known through generalizations independent of time and context. In contrast, for postpositivism reality cannot be completely understood because the understanding of laws of nature is incomplete (Sandoval-Casimilas, 1996).

On the other hand, qualitative approaches, which include the social-critical, constructivist and dialogic approaches, differentiate between empirical reality, which exists objectively and independently of a subject, and epistemic reality, which is the knowledge that is constructed from empirical reality. Thus, epistemic reality necessarily implies a cognizing subject, influenced by a particular culture and social relations, so that to analyze, define and understand epistemic reality it is necessary to take into account the ways of perceiving, thinking, feeling, and acting of these cognizing subjects (Sandoval-Casimilas, 1996).

5. How to measure Social Class

Social Class as a construct can be understood in different ways that have been classified into "gradational" and relational approaches. In the first one, there is a trend that grades social classes according to a single criterion (income, educational level, etc.) and, also, another trend grading them based on categories that synthesize several variables.

On the other hand, in the relational approach the essential difference between different ways of social class understanding is what type of social relations is taken as the basis to classify it. Social classes to the Marxist and neo-Marxist currents are objectively defined by the social relations of production; whereas, to the Weberian and Neoweberian currents they are defined by the market and labor relations and; to the Durkheimian current by relations based on the technical division of labor (Fresneda-Bautista, 2012).

Social Class Measurement has occupation as its main indicator. Thus, the occupational structure is usually used to class structure reconstruction in a given society; under the assumption (methodological individualism) that sum of individual occupational positions reproduces the whole, the social class structure (Sautu, 2011), which is considered a valid procedure in research, either through a survey or supported on secondary statistical data.

5. Measuring Social Class in Peripheral Countries

It is pertinent to analyze social class measurement in peripheral countries, in the global economy, using instruments designed in the central countries.

It is argued (Portes & Hoffman, 2003) that in peripheral countries such as Latin America, a significant proportion of the population is not incorporated into fully commercialized and legally regulated labor relations and survives on the sidelines, in a wide variety of subsistence or semi-clandestine economic activities; as well as that, in peripheral economies there is an imperfect development of modern capitalist relations, leading to the coexistence of different modes of production (modern, small business,

subsistence) and that, while proletariat in developed countries is homogeneous, in peripheral countries are segmented due to their limited incorporation into a fully monetarized and legally regulated economy.

Additionally, in contrast to developed countries, in peripheral countries not all occupations are related to the formal production process and even informality is very relevant since there are many self-employed (own-account workers, known as a freelancer) who are paid in cash, are not legally regulated and are “off the books”. On the other hand, it should be borne in mind that there are different types of informality in these peripheral countries: one is informal employees who work long hours in factories that exploit them and in poor working conditions; unregulated capitalist firms and marginalized informal self-employed, such as street vendors (Erik Olin Wright, personal communication, December 17, 2012).

Another argument supporting validity to use in peripheral countries questionnaires developed in central countries to social class measurement is that occupation is used as its main indicator; that, in different existing occupational classifications, refers to all occupations in the general society and not only to occupations that occur in the formal production process, but that also allows comparisons to be made at international level.

Among these classifications of occupation, the most relevant is the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO), which has been developed in different successive versions by the International Labor Office (ILO) and was adapted to Colombia (ISCO-AC) by DANE (National Administrative Department of Statistics). Other occupation classifications, which have been used to compare occupational status between different countries, are Treiman's Standard International Occupational Prestige Scale (SIOPS), Ganzeboom et al's International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status (ISEI), and the social class categories by Erikson and Goldthorpe's (EGP) (Ganzeboom, 1996).

6. Predominant Paradigm, methodology and methodological tool in Social Class Research in Colombia

A bibliographic search was made on social classes distribution research in Colombia in the databases Ebsco, Embase, Lilacs, Ovid, Pubmed, Science Direct, Scielo, Scopus, and Web of Science, between 1990-2015, using the keyword: "social class". The research found were reviewed in their following aspects: conceptual frameworks, methodologies, methodological instruments, the studied geographical area, periods analyzed, and results. Eleven research were found, all according to the positivist paradigm (article in press).

The predominant methodology used to evaluate social class distribution in Colombia was secondary statistical sources analysis using specific methodological instruments (article in press).

7. Some methodological instruments (Questionnaires) to measure Social Class:

There are diverse methodological instruments (questionnaires) to measure social class. Dimensions and variables used by some of these questionnaires are shown below, as well as its resulting classifications:

7.2. Questionnaire Erikson, Goldthorpe, Portocarero (EGP):

This questionnaire has a post-Weberian conceptual framework (Leiulfsrud et al., 2010).

Table 1. Dimensions and variables of the Erikson, Goldthorpe, Portocarero (EGP) questionnaire (Leiulfsrud et al., 2010):

Occupation	Company size	Autonomy		Hierarchy	
According to the International Classification of Occupations	If you are a business owner, how many employees do you have?	In your main job, what are you?	How much can you decide how you organize your	In your main job, are you assigned the responsibility of supervising other employees'	How many people are you responsible for in your job?

			daily work?	work? (or tell them what to do)	
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Table 2. Social classes according to the Erickson, Goldthorpe, Portocarero questionnaire (Leiulfsrud et al., 2010):

I	<i>Service class I</i> (higher-grade professionals, administrators, and officials; managers in large industrial establishments; large proprietors). Salariat (top class).
II	<i>Service class II</i> (lower-grade professionals, administrators, and officials; higher-grade technicians; managers in small industrial establishments; supervisors of non-manual employees). Salariat (top class).
IIIa	<i>Routine non-manual</i> (routine non-manual employees, higher grade - administration and commerce). Intermediate class.
IIIb	<i>Routine non-manual employees</i> , lower grade (sales and services). Intermediate class in original EGP model. Modified labor contract and associated with the working class in Goldthorpe's contract theoretical model.
IVa	<i>Self-empl with employees</i> (small proprietors, artisans, etc, with employees). Intermediate class.
IVb	<i>Self-empl with no employees</i> (small proprietors, artisans, etc, with no employees). Intermediate class.
IVc	<i>Self-empl. Farmers etc</i> (farmers and smallholders; other self-employed workers in primary production). Intermediate class. In some applications located in a separate agrarian stratum with agricultural workers (VIIb).
V	<i>Manual supervisors/Lower grade technicians</i> (lower grade technicians; supervisors of manual workers). At the bottom of the intermediate class. Sometimes merged with the working class in the original model. Mixed contract relation in Goldthorpe's contract theory, albeit part of an intermediate class.
VI	<i>Skilled workers</i> . Working-class.
VIIa	<i>Unskilled workers</i> (not in agriculture, etc). Working-class.

VIIb	<i>Farm labors</i> (agricultural and other workers in primary production). Working-class. In some applications located in separate agrarian strata with farmers (IVc).
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7.2.1. Questionnaire-based on Erik Olin Wright's Power / Control model:

Based on a Marxist conceptual framework; but simultaneously, it characterizes the middle social class using similar Weberian criteria (hierarchy/authority and skills/credentials) (Leiulfsrud et al., 2010).

This questionnaire analyzes power/control based on ownership of production means, authority, and autonomy at work.

Table 3. Dimensions and variables of the Wright questionnaire based on Power/Control (Leiulfsrud et al., 2010):

Occupation	Company size	Autonomy			Hierarchy		
According to the International Classification of Occupations	If you are a business owner, how many employees do you have?	In your main job, what are you doing?	Are you an employee or self-employed (independent)?	How much can you decide how you organize your daily work?	In your main job, are you assigned the responsibility of supervising other employees' work?	How many people are you responsible for in your job?	How much do you influence decisions made at your workplace? (in your educational institution, for those

							who only study; if you study and work, choose workplace)
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Table 4. Social classes according to the Wright questionnaire based on Power/Control (Leiulfstrud et al., 2010):

Power/control model (Wright, 1978)
Capitalists (10+ employees)
Small capitalists (w. 2-9 employees)
Self-employed (no employees)
Managers
Supervisors
Semi-autonomous employees (high autonomy/not mgr/superv.)
Working-class

7.2.2. Questionnaire-based on the exploitation model of Erik Olin Wright:

This questionnaire analyzes exploitation at work based on ownership of production means, authority, and replaces autonomy at work in his previous questionnaire by assets in skill and expertise.

Table 5. Dimensions and variables of the Wright questionnaire based on exploitation (Leiulfstrud et al., 2010):

Occupation	production means Ownership	Skills		Hierarchy		
International Classification of Occupations	If you are a business owner, how many employees do you have?	What type of position do you have at your job?	If your position is managerial, what is your level?	In your main job, are you assigned the responsibility of supervising other employees' work? (or tell them what to do)	How many people are you responsible for in your job?	Regarding the definition of policies in your work, such as making decisions about products and services to offer, the total number of people to hire, budget and, so on. Do you participate in making these decisions, or even advise on them?

Table 6. Social classes according to Wright's questionnaire based on exploitation (Leiulfsrud et al., 2010):

Exploitation model (Wright 1985, 1997)
Capitalists (10+ employees)
Small capitalists (w. 2-9 employees)
Self-employed (no employees)
Managers (expert, skilled unskilled)
Supervisors
Experts (professionals, highly educated, not mgr/sup)
Skilled workers (semi-professionals and skilled occupations, not mgr/superv).
Low-skilled workers (not mgr/superv).

7.3. Esping-Andersen questionnaire:

The Esping-Andersen questionnaire uses the same dimensions and variables as the Erickson, Goldthorpe, Portocarero questionnaire (Leiulfsrud et al., 2010).

This questionnaire partially has a post-Weberian focus; although, its theoretical language and emphasis on economic relations is influenced by Marxist and Institutional theoretical frameworks (Leiulfsrud et al., 2010).

Table 7. Social classes according to the Esping-Andersen questionnaire (Leiulfsrud et al., 2010):

Manager I. Superior Service
Manager II. Self-Employed 1-3
Self-employed without employees
Professionals
Technicians
Semi-professionals

Qualified assistants
Semi-skilled assistants
Administrative occupations
Sales occupations
Skilled manual workers
Unskilled manual workers
Farmworkers
Farmers

7.4. European Socioeconomic Classification (ESeC) questionnaires (respondent and her/his partner):

These questionnaires are a continuation, in operational terms, of the Erikson, Goldthorpe, Portocarero (EGP) questionnaire and have a post-Weberian conceptual framework; at the same time, they are supported by the Institutional Economic theories and the Contract theory (Leiulfsrud et al., 2010).

Table 8. Social classes according to the European Socioeconomic Classification (ESeC) questionnaires (respondent and her/his partner) (Leiulfsrud et al., 2010):

I	Professionals and managers, higher grade (service relationship)
II	Professionals and managers, lower grade & technicians' higher grade (modified service relationship)
IIIa	Routine non-manual employees, higher grade (mixed contract)
IIIb	Routine non-manual employees, lower grade (modified labor contract)
IVa-c	Small proprietors and employers and self-employed workers
V	Technicians, lower grade supervisors of manual workers (mixed contract)
VI	Skilled manual workers (modified labor contract)
VIIa	Nonskilled manual workers (not in agriculture) (labor contract)
VIIb	Agricultural workers (labor contract)

7.5. Comparison of previous questionnaires

One research (Leiulfsrud et al., 2010), carried out in a sample of more than 22 thousand people in 20 European countries and including Israel, compared the Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portocarrero questionnaire; the two classifications of Erik Olin Wright (one that analyzes power/control based on ownership of production means, authority and autonomy at work; as well as, another one that analyzes exploitation at work, replacing the third element mentioned (autonomy at work) by assets in skill and expertise); the Gøsta Esping-Andersen questionnaire, the European Socioeconomic Classification (ESeC) and the Treiman Index, based on the occupation nomenclature.

This research showed differences and similarities of the first five classifications mentioned, based on hierarchy, ownership of the means of production, skills, and autonomy; Likewise, it highlighted that the operational dimension of these classifications had a high degree of overlap, since they were focused on power relations, education, and skills, as well as on an employment and industrial relations perspective. It also pointed out that, although occupation is an important element for operationalization of social class configurations, the question remains open: To what extent is occupational homogeneity or heterogeneity an advantage in the construction of social class typologies?

Furthermore, this research pointed out that social class configurations based on the Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portocarero (EGP), European Socio-economic Classification (ESeC), and the Wright's two questionnaires cannot be reduced to occupation. This last assertion can be sustained, since, although these questionnaires ask about occupation, they also consider other aspects related to it, such as hierarchy, ownership of production means, autonomy, and control over production process; as well as occupation characteristics (independent, employee, family business employee) and the aspect of Social Class reproductive moment related to current family income perception.

These authors question classifications based on occupation, since they rarely find them consistent over time (regarding occupation), not very neutral in gender (since there is usually more differentiation and information on men's occupation), little objective (occupations tasks content varies over time, between organizations and sectors, as well as, in countries) or very little informative in terms of relationships at work (decision-making process, autonomy at work, etc.).

SPSS syntax of the five previous questionnaires, to statistically process information collected with them, can be found in the Word version of Leiulfsrud, H., Bison, I., & Solheim, E. (2010). SOCIAL CLASS IN EUROPE II, The European Social Survey 2002-2008. (Leiulfsrud et al., 2010). Keep in mind that this syntax is for the International Standard Classification of Occupation (ISCO) and that in many countries is used an occupation classification adapted in each country, as well as that all these classifications have periodically updated versions.

7.6. INSOC: Questionnaire to research social insertion in population (Breilh, n.d.):

This questionnaire has a Marxist focus.

Table 9. Dimensions and variables of the questionnaire to research social insertion in the population (INSOC) (Breilh, n.d.):

Definition of main economic responsible	Location of occupation, trade, or profession of the responsible person	work elements ownership	The main task at work	The most important source of income	Type of work	Fraction according to consumption level
Who is the main person in charge of	Occupational group of the main person responsible	At work, you own (first choice,	The main task	primary income source of main	According to work branch	Monthly household income/level of education

the household economy?	for the household economy	main) and (second choice)	at work	economic family supporter	and type of work	achieved per respondent
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Table 10. Social classes according to the questionnaire to research social insertion in the population (INSOC) (Breilh, n.d.):

Wealthy middle layer
Middle layer not wealthy
Owner craftsman with small workshop
Small producer owner merchant
Small producer family peasant farmer
Small industrial entrepreneur
Businessmen
Workers, salaried employees in role and insurance
Under-salaried, day laborers, informal hiring
Wealthy retirees
Retirees not well-off
Military high ranking
Military troop
Not classifiable

7.7. Fresneda's Model:

This questionnaire has a structuralist approach and was used by its author to analyze changes in accumulation regimes in Colombia and how they affected class structure configuration. These classes in turn, as social actors, determined the accumulation regime itself and its institutional forms, as well as the differences of participation in resources and benefits from society, being an important cause of social inequalities (Fresneda-Bautista, 2016).

Table 11. Dimensions and variables of the Fresneda's questionnaire (Fresneda-Bautista, 2016):

activity branch	occupation	occupational position	number of workers
activity to which establishment or company where the working person is engaged, based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations (Adapted to Colombia by DANE ²)	task or occupation performed by a working person, according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (Adapted to Colombia by DANE)	It is the dependency relationship in which a working person practices her/his occupation (employers or patrons, self-employees, unpaid family workers, salaried workers (employees, laborers, and domestic employees)	in companies where work activity is carried out

Table 12. Social classes according to the Fresneda's questionnaire (Fresneda-Bautista, 2016):

Ia	Directive patrons
Ib	Salaried directives
IIa	Independent professionals and technicians
IIb	Salaried professionals and technicians
Va	Management and control employees (administrative, commercial, and services)

² DANE: Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística, de Colombia.

Vb	Employees (administrative, commercial, and services) without management and control functions
IIIa	The petty bourgeoisie and independent workers (in industry, commerce, and services) in companies with more than 5 workers
IIIb	The petty bourgeoisie and independent workers (independent workers in the industry, commerce, and services) in companies with up to 5 workers
IVa	Peasants at farms with more than 5 workers
IVb	Peasants at farms with up to 5 workers
VIa	Supervisors and Skilled and Semi-Skilled Industrial Workers
VIb	Laborers in craft occupations
VIc	Unskilled industrial workers: workers in low-skilled occupations and in manual and repetitive tasks
VII	Agricultural workers
VIII	Domestic employees
IX	Other workers

8. Discussion

The Post-class analysis approach questions the usefulness of the social class construct to understand social dynamics and, above all, inequities; Indeed, it considers that, as social class is understood from the Marxist and Weberian conceptions, it is no longer an empirically useful category to understand such inequities in contemporary societies, since inequities are not correlated with social classes (Erik Olin Wright, 2005); because in contemporary societies social structures and functions (social configurations) centered on social classes would be fading and social complexity would be increasing.

In the social analysis by this position, perspectives are used to recognize changing configurations of social inequality, taken from Tocqueville, Durkheim, and Weber. Thus, the social class construct is relativized and the premise of primacy of class structure as the column of social structure and as the matrix of social stratification is modulated (Pakulski, 2005).

Beyond the above, research on social class matters not only because it leads to an understanding of stratification in society and its effects, but also because social class is related to social decision-making process configuration (society power), namely, with its mechanisms, as well as actors' strength and relative position (including those excluded) in this social decision-making arena. Likewise, it is related to the social stakeholder game. All of which configures differential access to social resources.

For its part, research on social classes in Colombia, to date, has only used the positivist paradigm and no other paradigms, as well as analysis of secondary statistical sources methodology and corresponding methodological instruments, whereby it has not yet been taken advantage of the richness that different paradigms, methodologies, and methodological instruments can also provide to understand the structure and dynamics of social classes in Colombia.

On the other hand, Social Class measurement raises some difficulties; one of which is that occupation is usually used as its main indicator. Wright (Erik Olin Wright, personal communication, December 17, 2012) argues that possible limitations of measuring social class focusing on work can be applied to questionnaires that quantitatively measure social class.

This question arises because, although occupation is related to social class membership and occupational distribution in a given society is associated with its class structure, equating occupational structure to social class structure (Sautu, 2011) may not show important aspects of social stratification. Additionally, the central position of occupation in social class categorization does not let classify the not-working population portion, which in many societies is large.

On the other hand, although it is possible to categorize social class in population linked to the informal sector based on social class dimensions of questionnaires shown above, certain difficulties persist, since their characterizations of social class are focused on formal and traditional sectors of the economy.

On its part, another difficulty in researching social class is what to measure it with, since there are different methodological instruments (mainly questionnaires) to do so, which originate in different conceptual frameworks about it. The paradox is that practical differences of these instruments are more due to technical aspects of each of them than to technical aspects of them among themselves (Erik Ollin Wright, 1997) (Leiulfsrud et al., 2010).

All questionnaires shown in this article used the "Occupation" dimension as the social class main indicator. Social class dimensions in questionnaires shown in this article were, in descending order of use: dimension "Control of production process" (in terms of: "at work you are") is used in the questionnaires Erikson, Goldthorpe, Portocarero; both of Wright; the Esping-Andersen; the European Socioeconomic Classification (ESeC) (respondent and her/his partner) and, in the INSOC. The questionnaires Erikson, Goldthorpe, Portocarero; both of Wright; Esping-Andersen, INSOC use the dimension "Ownership of production means".

On its part, the "Autonomy" Dimension is used by the Erikson, Goldthorpe, Portocarero questionnaires; Wright's based on Power/Control model and the Esping-Andersen. The "Hierarchy" dimension is used by the Erikson, Goldthorpe, Portocarero questionnaire; the two of Wright, the Esping-Andersen; the European Socioeconomic Classification (ESeC) questionnaires (respondent and her/his partner); INSOC and Fresneda's one.

Following social class dimensions are used by a single questionnaire: "Skills", by Wright's based on the exploitation model. The dimensions "Reproductive moment" and "Characteristics of family members work" are used by the European Socioeconomic Classification (ESeC) questionnaires (respondent and her/his partner). The dimension "Branch of activity" is used by INSOC and Fresneda's questionnaires.

Classifications based only on occupation are questioned because they are rarely consistent over time regarding the subject's variations in her/his occupation and that they are not very neutral in gender, since, normally they reflect more differentiation and information about men's occupation. Also, that they are not very objective, because the

content of occupations tasks varies over time, between organizations and sectors, as well as, in countries. Also, they are very uninformative in terms of work relationships, decision-making process, autonomy at work, etc. (Leiulfsrud et al., 2010).

In contrast, some social class questionnaires, such as the Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portocarero (EGP), the two European Socio-economic Classification (ESeC) (respondent and her/his partner), and the two by Wright cannot be reduced to occupation, since, although they ask for occupation, they also take into account other aspects related to it, such as hierarchy, production means ownership, autonomy and production process control; as well as occupation characteristics (independent, employee, family business employee) and aspect of the Social Class reproductive moment related to the perception of current family income (Leiulfsrud et al., 2010).

On the other hand, these latter questionnaires, as well as the Gøsta Esping-Andersen and the Treiman Index, based on the nomenclature of occupation, also analyze skills and autonomy. However, their operational dimensions have a high degree of overlap, since they are focused on power relations, education, and skills, as well as on an employment and industrial relations perspective (Leiulfsrud et al., 2010).

9. Conclusions

Social class is an analytical category of society that is essential to understand its structure and dynamics, as well as the influence of social context on specific phenomena that occur in society. In this last sense, social class contributes significantly in the analysis of social inequities and, among these, those of health-disease; all of which are currently little explored research areas using this construct.

There is a diversity of approaches and conceptions to understand social class, as well as a plurality of paradigms, methodologies, and methodological instruments to investigate it; there is no one that subsumes all the others. Therefore, it is often not possible to compare different studies' results. Nevertheless, this diversity in ways of understanding social class and the plurality of ways in investigating it makes it possible

to enrich research on social class distribution, as well as the relationship between social class and diverse social phenomena.

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