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| C:\Users\bjaco\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Word\SLS-Teaching-Toolkit-Logo_Stacked-Initials.jpg | Stratification Monopoly: A Comparative Perspective |
| **Discipline:** All | **Type:** In-Class Exercise; Discussion; Reading  | **Time Commitment:** 80-175 mins | **Category**: Using Data; Equity, Justice & Sustainability |
| **Big Ideas:** [Inequality, Poverty and Sustainable Development](http://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/big-idea/inequality-poverty-and-sustainable-development) |
| **OVERVIEW:**Some of the major challenges in teaching about economic inequality and mobility are a) understanding the differences between income and wealth, as well as other types of economic resources; b) encouraging students to be empathetic to those who have a different economic standing than their own; c) the connections between income and wealth in producing economic mobility; and d) understanding how the income and wealth distributions across different countries shape opportunity for mobility in a comparative context. The purpose of this tool is to help students begin to understand: 1. The primary differences in income and wealth, and how they relate to economic mobility;
2. How your place in the economic system can affect opportunities for economic mobility;
3. How variation in the income and wealth distributions of different countries can affect opportunities for economic mobility.

This tool was contributed by Allen Hyde. |
| **INSTRUCTIONS:** The tool below provides detailed instructions for leading either 1-3 class periods, depending on your needs. Rather than distribute the document to students, use it as a guide for designing your class. *Things you need*: one Monopoly board for each group of five students in your class. You can use your own, or check some out from Serve-Learn-Sustain by contacting us via email: serve-learn-sustain@gatech.edu.  |
| **SLS STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES & ASSESSMENT:**The Serve-Learn-Sustain toolkit teaching tools are designed to help students achieve not only SLS student learning outcomes (SLOs), but the unique learning outcomes for your own courses. Reflection, concept maps, rubrics, and other assessment methods are shown to improve student learning. For resources on how to assess your students’ work, please review our [Assessment Tools](http://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/tool-category/assessment). **This tool achieves SLO 1. See the end of this tool for further details.** |

**Want Help?**

Allen Hyde is the contact for this tool. You can reach him at allen.hyde@hsoc.gatech.edu.

Stratification Monopoly: A Comparitive Perspective

**Overview**

Economic inequality and mobility are widely discussed and polarizing issues in the United States, particularly in the political realm; however, students often fail to grasp what the two concepts are and the different types associated with each. Stratification Monopoly was developed by a variety of different social scientists to help provide active learning and participatory experiences that help students to understand the complexities of economic inequality and mobility. This version of the game provides a comparative two country experience, the United States and Finland, using real income and wealth data from the [Luxembourg Wealth Study](https://www.lisdatacenter.org/our-data/lws-database/).

This tool provides a scaffolded series of assignments that allow instructors to tailor stratification monopoly to their specific needs. For example, the instructions below offer guidelines for shortening this tool to one class period (with discussion of income and wealth beforehand).You will also find several alternative versions of this game based on academic teaching articles that focus on poverty, race, and gender.

The purpose of this tool is to help students begin to understand:

1. The primary differences in income and wealth, and how they relate to economic mobility;
2. How your place in the economic system can affect opportunities for economic mobility, both in relative and absolute terms;
3. How variation in the income and wealth distributions of different countries can affect opportunities for economic mobility.

This tool is intended to take two to three class periods of 75 minutes each. However, you can also adapt the tool to take just one class period of 75 minute, or two 50-minute classes. Follow the guidelines below to learn how to use this tool.

**Class Session 1: Introduction to Economic Inequality and Mobility**

To prepare for this class and the game, assign the following two short and easily accessible readings:

# [The Many Ways to Measure Economic Inequality](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/09/22/the-many-ways-to-measure-economic-inequality/) by Drew DeSilver. This source focuses on different types of economic inequality.

1. [Mobility: What Are You Talking About?](https://www.brookings.edu/blog/social-mobility-memos/2014/06/05/mobility-what-are-you-talking-about/) By Richard V. Reeves and Joanna Venator. This source examines different types of economic mobility.

Discuss these sources in the first class as a lead up to playing the game Stratification Monopoly.

**What is Economic Inequality and Mobility? (approx. 30-50 min.)**

1. Walk students through the attached PowerPoint, [Stratification Monopoly Part 1: Measuring Inequality and Mobility, and Stratification Monopoly Part 2: Rules of the Game](https://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Toolkit-Docs/stratification_monopoly_ppt.pptx). For your own preparation, refer to the Notes in the PowerPoint beforehand so that you have a sense of each slide’s larger purpose.
2. Wrap up by distributing the attached handouts: [“Table 1. USA Variation”](https://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Toolkit-Docs/table_1._usa_variation.doc) and [“Table 2. Finland Variation,”](https://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Toolkit-Docs/table_2._finland_variation.doc) as well as a list of the pre-defined groups. Remind students that it is important that they are on time for class when they play the game. Encourage students to look over the handouts before they play the game in the next class.

**Class Session 2-3. Playing the game: Stratification Monopoly (approx. 50-150 min.)**

In a separate class period or two, students will now play Stratification Monopoly. Ideally students should play both versions of the game (the USA and Finland) over two class periods (this can work in 50 minute class periods; however, 75 minute class periods are ideal because students get farther along in the game).

If you only have one class period to dedicate to this portion of the tool, skip the comparative Finland version and have students play only the American version.

When students arrive for class on the first day, immediately start putting them into their groups and distribute the Monopoly board games. Have extra copies of the handouts in case folks forget. At this point, you should also distribute the [“Stratification Monopoly Student Handout,”](https://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Toolkit-Docs/stratification_monopoly_student_handout.doc) which includes Discussion Questions that you will use at the end of class. Remind students that they need to choose their version of the game (income, wealth, or income and wealth) and the banker. Have students play up until 10 minutes left in the class period (for a 50 minute class, this is quick).

Spend the last 10 minutes discussing some of the questions on the back of the Student Handout. You can also create your own questions. Reflection is essential to students understanding the purpose of the exercise, so be sure to leave time for this.

If you decide to do the Finland version of the game, play that on the following day with 10 minutes remaining for discussion questions, as well as discussing how the USA and Finland games are different.

Finally, you can show the students the following [clip from PBS](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnQwTS-K6jI) (optional) that inspired the game.

Depending on your time constraints, you can also have the students write a reflection paper about the experience. Allen Hyde has offered [this example](https://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Toolkit-Docs/stratification_monopoly_written_reflection.docx) for your reference.

**Alternative Versions of Stratification Monopoly**

This version of Stratification Monopoly focuses on economic disparities. See below for other examples of how to use Monopoly to teach social stratification.

[Coghlan, Catherine L. and Denise W. Huggins. “That’s Not Fair!: A Simulation Exercise in Social Stratification and Structural Inequality.” (*Teaching Sociology* 2004).](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0092055X0403200203)

*This is the original modified version of the game Monopoly*. ABSTRACT: Social stratification may be one of the most difficult topics covered in sociology classes. This article describes an interactive learning exercise, using a modified version of the game Monopoly, intended to stress the structural nature of social inequality and to stimulate student reflection and class discussion on social stratification in the United States. The primary focus of this exercise is to help students experience different levels of social stratification and to challenge the idea that individual talents or aspirations are enough to overcome structural barriers to upward class mobility. Student reactions to the experience suggest that it is an effective tool for demonstrating the structural nature of social inequality in the United States and for stimulating discussion on social inequality and related topics. This exercise has worked well in introductory sociology, social problems, and social inequality classes.

[Fisher, Edith M. “USA Stratified Monopoly: A Simulation Game about Social Class Stratification.” (*Teaching Sociology* 2008).](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0092055X0803600307)

Similar to the Coghlan and Huggins version, this version has more complex rules.

[Warren, Waren. “Using Monopoly to Introduce Concepts of Race and Ethnic Relations.” *(The Journal of Effective Teaching* 2011*).*](https://www.uncw.edu/jet/articles/Vol11_1/Waren.pdf)

ABSTRACT: In this paper, I suggest a technique that uses the familiar Parker Brother’s game Monopoly to introduce core concepts of race and ethnic relations. I offer anecdotes from my classes where an abbreviated version of the game is used as an analog to highlight the sociological concepts of direct institutional discrimination, the legacy of discrimination, colorblind racism, affirmative action, and reparations. I describe how, after playing the game, the participants spend a short amount of time debriefing in order to express their emotions and examine their motivations. Later, in a broader class discussion, I invite both participants and observers to explain the motivations, attitudes, and behaviors of all players and connect these explanations to theoretical concepts in sociology. After debriefing and discussion, I refer to the shared experiences of the students from the game in subsequent lectures and readings.

[Ansoms, An and Sarah Green. “Development Monopoly: A Simulation Game on Poverty and Inequality.” (*Simulation & Gaming* 2012)](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1046878112451877)

ABSTRACT: DEVELOPMENT MONOPOLY is a simulation game that allows players to experience how power relations influence the agency of different socioeconomic groups, and how this can induce poverty and inequality. Players alter the original rules of the MONOPOLY board game so that they more accurately reflect social stratification and inequalities in the context of developing countries. After the game, the players reflect on how they could be made more inclusive and pro-poor. In an individual debriefing, they are invited to think about the connections between game dynamics and contemporary evolutions in developing countries. In a final collective debriefing phase, participants discuss the ways in which the simulation experience enhanced their understandings of poverty and inequality.

[Smith, Stacy. “Gender Stratified Monopoly: Why Do I Earn Less and Pay More?” (*Teaching Sociology* 2017*)*](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0092055X16669988)

ABSTRACT: A modified version of Monopoly has long been used as a simulation exercise to teach inequality. Versions of Modified Monopoly (MM) have touched on minority status relative to inequality, but without an exploration of the complex interaction between minority status and class. This paper introduces Gender Stratified Monopoly (GSM), an adaptation that can be added to existing version of MM, as a step toward such a conversation. I draw upon written student reflections and observations from five test courses over two years to demonstrate the effectiveness of GSM. Data indicates student recognition of the female status as more economically challenging and less “fair” relative to the male status, with real-world consequences.

SLS Student Learning Outcomes

1. Identify relationships among ecological, social, and economic systems.
2. Demonstrate skills needed to work effectively in different types of communities.
3. Evaluate how decisions impact the sustainability of communities.
4. Describe how to use their discipline to make communities more sustainable.\*

\* *Note:* SLO 4 is intended to be used by upper division, project-based courses such as Capstone.