

Exploring the Intersection of Race, Class, and Social Mobility

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**New data, or new interpretations of
existing data?**



Defining Social Mobility

- ▶ **Social Mobility:** A measure of how well an individual, family, or group can move from one economic position to another
 - ▶ Upward mobility (moving from a low economic position to a high one)
 - ▶ Downward mobility (falling from a high position / unable to maintain this status)
- ▶ Wealth is often key in enabling upward mobility and preventing downward mobility
- ▶ **Key question:** Is mobility measured on an intergenerational basis, or a personal basis?



What is the “good society”?

- ▶ High degree of upward mobility?
- ▶ Adequate floor on well-being, no matter how low one falls? (Rawls)



Can everyone move upward?





Boundaries on Upward Mobility and Measurement Issues

- ◀ Structural stratification
- ◀ Structural racism



Mobility for Whom? And Over What Timeline?

- ▶ Individual mobility: life course, intergenerational
- ▶ Group (racial, ethnic) mobility: life course, intergenerational



Defining Social Class

- ▶ **Social Class:** Nebulous term that is conventionally defined by sociologists via combination of occupation and income to create “bottom, working, middle, and upper classes”
 - ▶ Alternatively, can be defined via educational attainment and asset ownership
- ▶ In the following discussion, the authors define it based on *occupation* : The “working class” is *productive labor, i.e. persons who are neither business owners nor hired managers*



Criteria for Mobility: Wealth and Income

Wealth

- ◀ Stock of resources that an individual carries over time
- ◀ Difference between what an individual owns and what an individual owes

Income

- ◀ Flow of resources
- ◀ Earnings
- ◀ How much did one bring in over a given amount of time



Key Findings

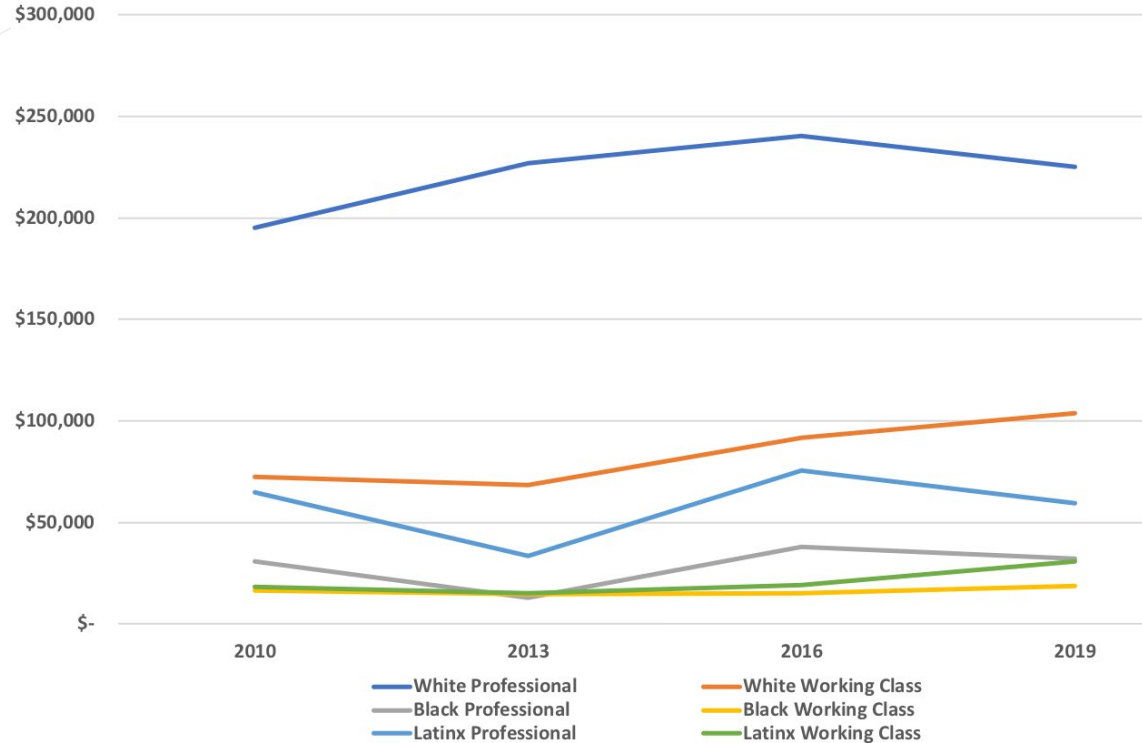
From Addo and Darity: “Disparate Recoveries: Wealth, Race, and the Working Class after the Great Recession” (2021)

- ▶ In the recession, Black and Latino households lost 48% and 44% of their wealth, respectively. White households lost just 26%.
- ▶ Whether professional or working class, Black and Latino -led households were less likely than white households to reach the three upper wealth quintiles (“middle class” status).
- ▶ The proportion of “wealth poor” families largely decreased from 2010 to 2019, but it *increased* among Black professionals.

Net Worth by Working Class Status, 2010-2019

		2010	2013	2016	2019	Abs. Change	% Change
(Non-Latinx) White	Working Class in labor force (LF)	\$77,116	\$74,566	\$100,720	\$114,270	\$37,154	48.18
	Professional Class (LF)	\$274,650	\$294,914	\$284,293	\$276,000	\$1,350	0.49
(Non-Latinx) Black	Working Class (LF)	\$17,085	\$14,551	\$15,167	\$19,920	\$2,835	16.60
	Professional Class (LF)	\$34,464	\$17,351	\$46,138	\$38,800	\$4,336	12.58
Latinx	Working Class (LF)	\$20,042	\$16,308	\$21,069	\$35,660	\$15,618	77.93
	Professional Class (LF)	\$68,091	\$49,637	\$93,818	\$104,810	\$36,719	53.93

Median Wealth Among Working Class and Professional Class Households



Thank You!

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