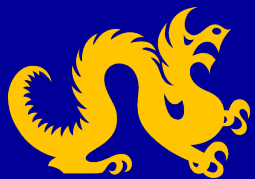


Conceptual and methodologic considerations on the contributions of work to health disparities

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Outline

- Alternative conceptualizations of “work” as a contributor to health disparities
- Work as an integral part of the systems that generate and sustain health disparities
- Implications for research

Three alternative
conceptualizations of work as a
contributor to health disparities

Work as an indicator of social class

Occupation (and work relations) as a reflection of location in system of production-fundamental driver of inequities.

Employment relations, social class and health: A review and analysis of conceptual and measurement alternatives

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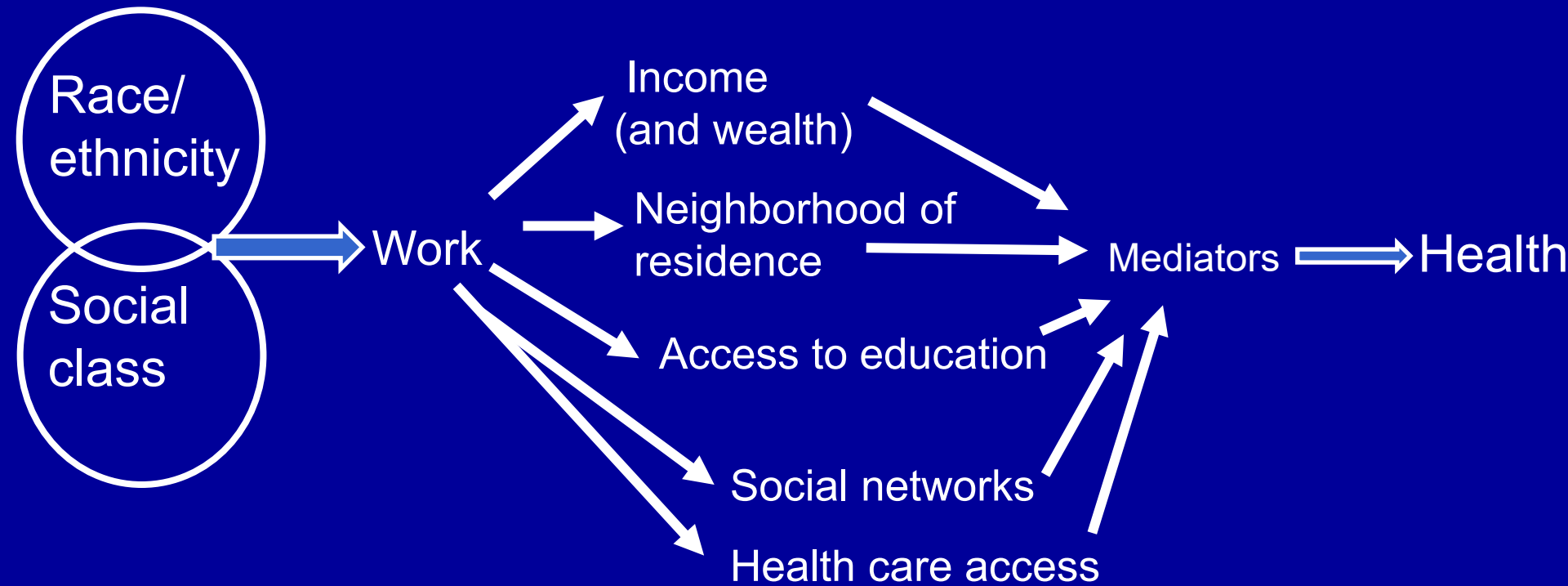
ABSTRACT

Employment relations, as a theoretical framework for social class, represent a complementary approach to social stratification. Employment relations introduce social relations of ownership and control over productive assets to the analysis of inequalities in economic (e.g., income), power (occupational hierarchy), and cultural (e.g., education) resources. The objectives of this paper are to briefly clarify the theoretical background on socio-economic indicators used in social epidemiology and to conduct a review of empirical studies that adopt relational social class indicators in the socio-epidemiological literature.

Measures of employment relations in social determinants of health research can be classified within two major conceptual frameworks: 1) "Neo-Weberian", like the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) which is widely used in the United Kingdom; and 2) "Neo-Marxian", like Erik O. Wright's social class indicators, which are being used by social epidemiologists in the Americas and Europe. Our review of empirical findings (49 articles found) reveals that the relation between employment relations and health does not necessarily imply a graded relationship. For example, small employees can exhibit worse health than highly skilled workers, and supervisors can display worse health than frontline workers. The policy implications of employment relations research are therefore different, and complement those of income or education health gradient studies. While the latter studies tend to emphasize income redistribution policy options, employment relations implicate other factors such as workplace democracy and social protection. Our analysis confirms that the current transformation of employment relations calls for new social class concepts and measures to explain social inequalities in health and to generate policies to reduce them.

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Work as an antecedent to health- relevant resources



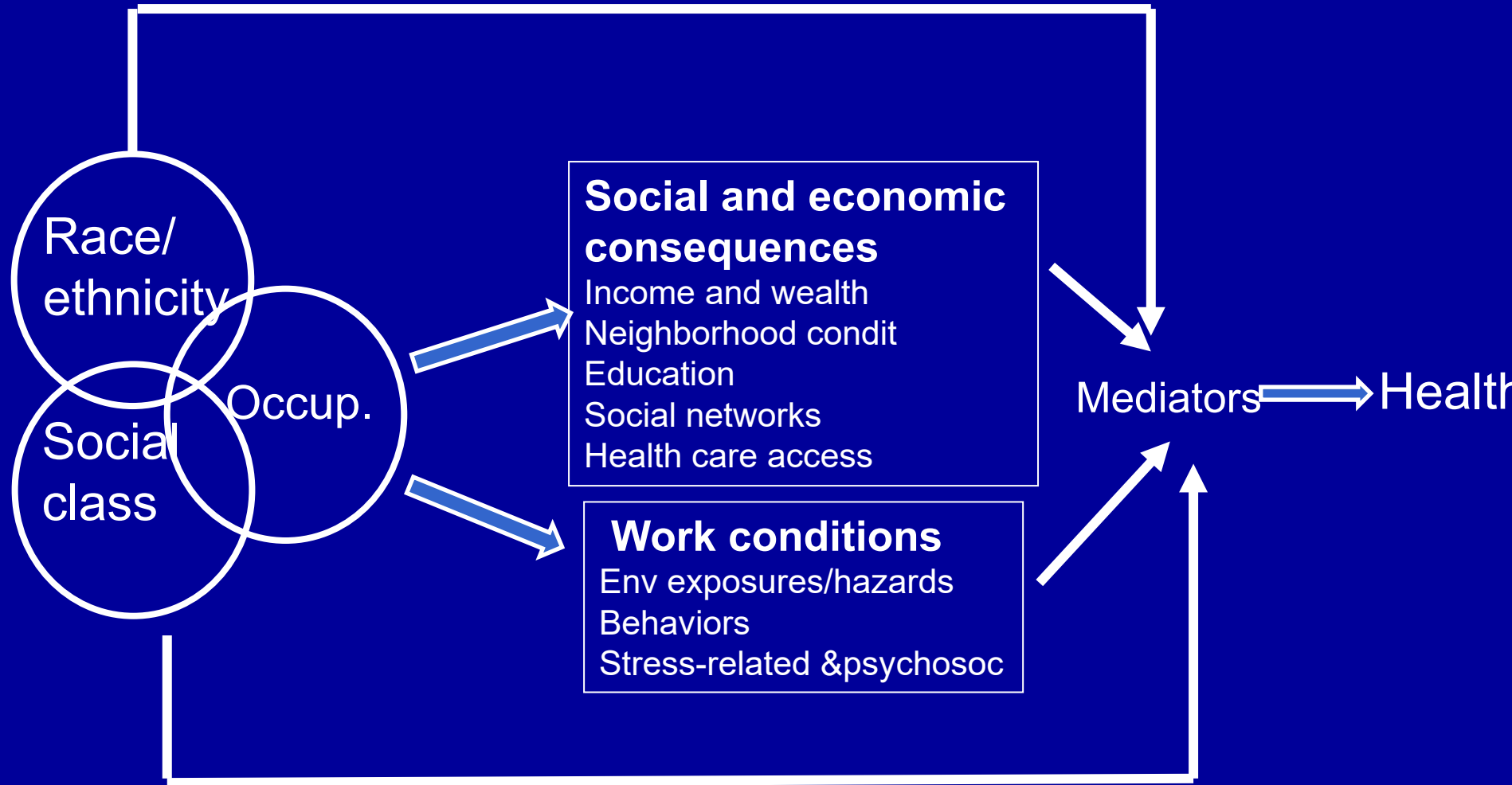
Things that work provides that in turn have health implications.

Work conditions as part of the processes/mechanisms linking social class and race/ethnicity to health

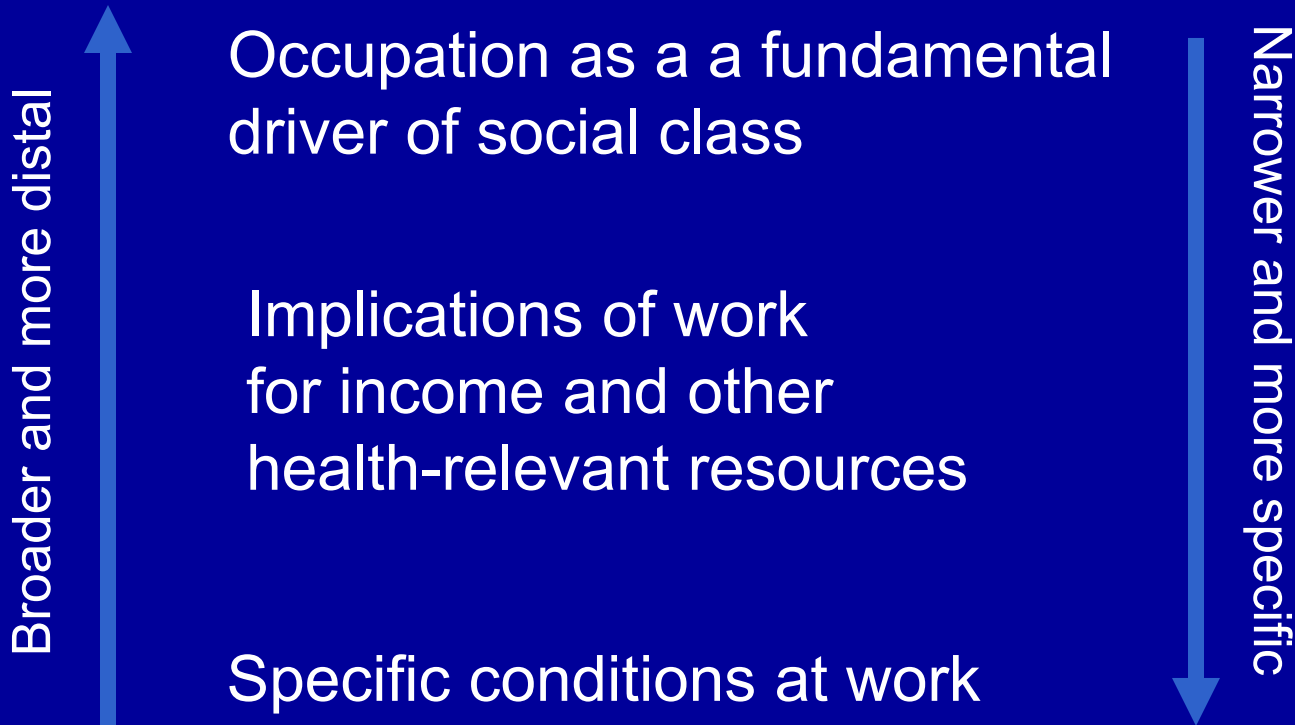


Things that work does to one or that happen to one while one is at work.

Work a social class marker, as an antecedent to social conditions and as a source of “exposures”



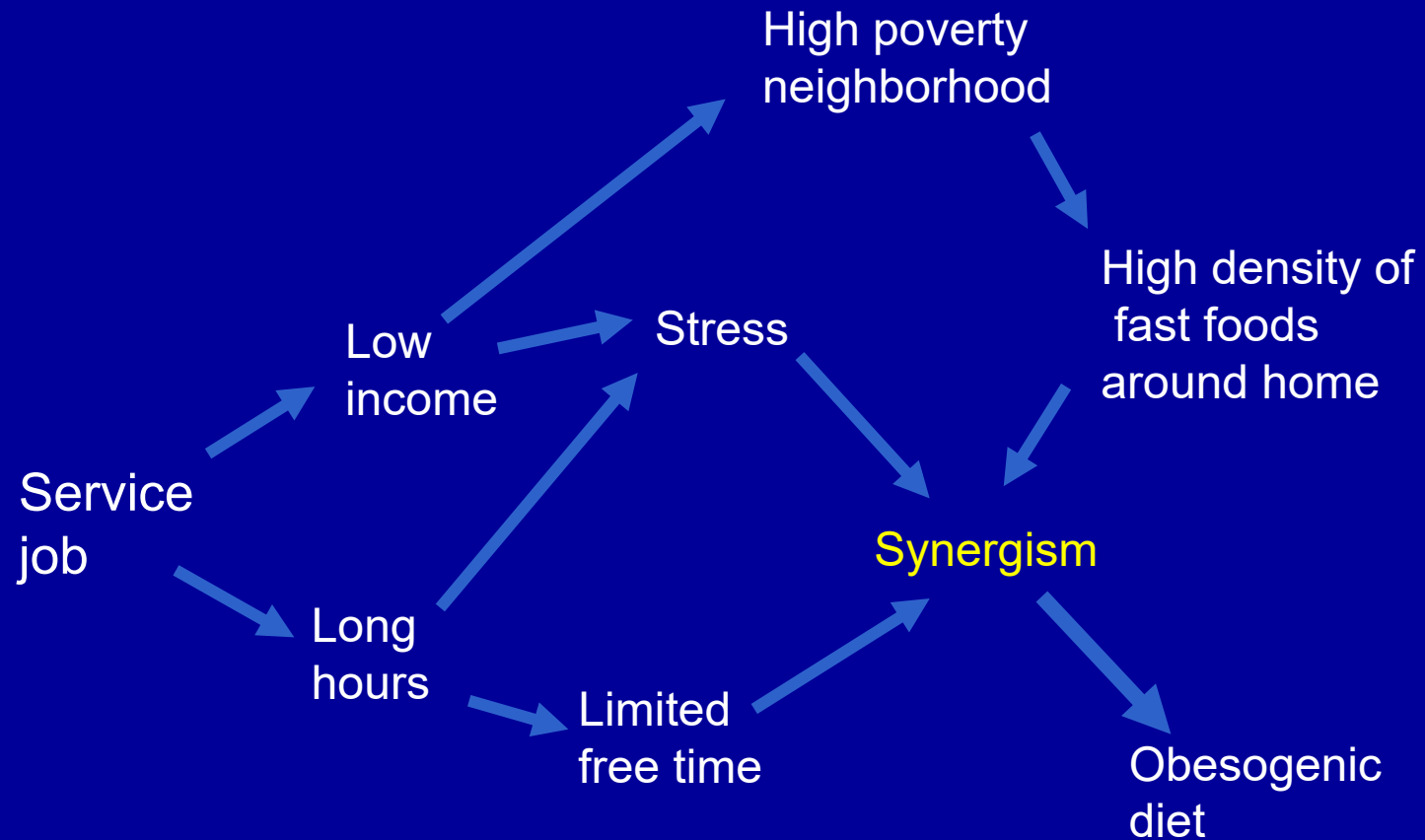
Simultaneous impact of the three conceptualizations



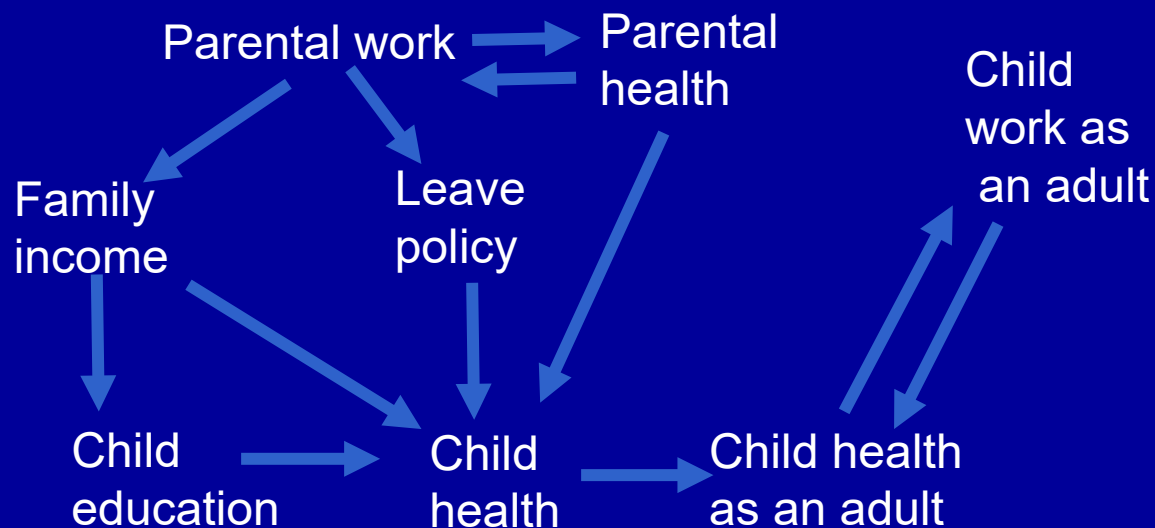
Work as an integral part of the systems that generate and sustain health disparities

- Interactions (synergisms)
- Feedbacks
- Effects distant in time

Synergistic effects of work, stress, and neighborhood context



Feedbacks between work and health over the life course and across generations



Implications for research

- Specify clear conceptual model and where “work” fits in
- Evaluate design and analytical implications
- Consider a standard set of work- related measures for inclusion in multiple studies

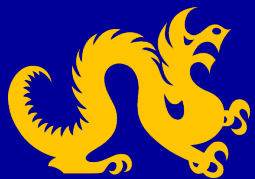
Implications for research (cont.)

- Describe how work and work conditions differ by race-ethnicity, gender, SEP---role of structural inequality and racism
- Focus on added value of work—policy relevant features/amenable to intervention
- Interaction of work with other domains
- Complementarity of methods-quant, qual (case studies), cross country comparisons

Big policy-relevant question examples

- Conditions at work: exposures at work, organization of work (e.g. control)—esp service work
- Conditions of employment: “flexible” employment, remote work, hours, leave policies
- Consequences of work: compensation, time, social mobility

Thank you!



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