

1 **Social Stratification**

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Refers to a system by which society ranks categories of people in a hierarchy, and involves four principles:

- It is a **trait** of society
- It **persists over generations**
- It is **universal**, but variable
- It involves **inequality** and **beliefs**

3 **Caste and Class systems**

Sociologists distinguish between “closed” systems, which allow for little change in social position; and “open” systems permit some social mobility.

4 **The Caste system**

Social stratification based on family heritage or birth. One’s social position is pre-determined with no chance for social mobility.

- Families in each caste perform one type of work-(determines occupation)
- Endogamy-(marriage within your group)
- Shape people’s beliefs-(acceptance)
- Guides everyday life-(limit social contacts)
- Ex. India

5 **The Class System**

Social stratification based on both birth and individual achievement.
 Modern economy depends on developing people’s talents.

Class systems are more open:
■ Schooling and skills lead to social mobility

6 **Class system’ con’t**

Mobility in turn blurs class distinctions:
■ Categorizing people according to sex, color or social background is wrong.
All acquire political rights and (in principle) equal standing before the law.
Work has become more of a personal choice.

7 **Class system; con’t**

Meritocracy: Social stratification based on personal merit.
 This is more common in industrial and post industrial societies.
 In a pure meritocracy, your social standing and wealth would depend upon your latest performance. (either upward or downward) A lot of social mobility

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Why do modern industrial (post industrial) societies keep some elements of Caste (such as letting wealth pass from generation to generation) rather than becoming complete meritocracies?

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- Pure meritocracies erodes families and other social groups that we value. (economic performance is not everything)
- Therefore some Caste elements are retained to maintain order and social togetherness.

10 **Class system; con't**

- Status consistency: refers to the degree of consistency in a person's standing across various dimensions of social equality.
- Ex. Higher standing in society- higher income level
 - Caste- High status consistency
 - Class- Lower or less status consistency

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An illustration of this is from feudal England. English society was divided into three estates:

1. The hereditary nobility
2. The clergy
3. The commoners

12 **Classless Societies**

- In spite of advertising to the contrary, there is NO society in the world without some degree of social inequality.
 - EX: The former Soviet Union
 - Although claiming to be classless, the jobs people held fell into four unequal categories.
 - Apparatchiks (High gov't officials)
 - Soviet intelligentsia
 - Manual workers
 - Rural peasantry

13 **Structural Social Mobility**

- A shift in the social position of large numbers of people due more to changes in society itself than to individual effort.
- During the twentieth century, there was as much upward social mobility in the Soviet Union as in Great Britain or the United States.

14 **The power behind stratification**

- It persists because it is backed up by an IDEOLOGY (cultural beliefs that justify stratification)

15 **Comparison Functional v. Conflict**

- Functional- all cultures consider some type of inequality as "fair."
 - Stratification keeps society operating. Linking rewards to important social positions.
 - Matches talents and abilities to appropriate occupations
 - Useful and inevitable

16 **Con't**

- Values and beliefs which legitimize social inequality are widely shared through society.
- Maintain stability and acceptance over time because of the support of cultural values.
 - Plato
 - Davis-Moore: (beneficial consequences for the operation of a society)

17 **Con't**

- Conflict- stratification is the result of social conflict. Resources serve the interests of some and harm others.
- Stratification ensures that much talent and ability in society will not be developed at all.
- Stratification is useful only to some people; not inevitable.

18 **Con't**

- Values and beliefs tend to be ideological and reflect the interests of the powerful members of society.
- Systems of stratification reflect the interests of only part of society and unlikely to remain stable over time.
 - Marx
 - Weber

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20 **Davis-Moore Thesis-Critical analysis.**

- 1) difficult to specify the functional importance of a given occupation (Some are over-rewarded/ under-rewarded)...
- 2) ignores how stratification prevents to development of individual talents, and...
- 3) inequality may promote conflict and revolution.

21 **Stratification and Conflict**

Marx: Work under capitalism produces only alienation, isolation and misery resulting from powerlessness.

Socialism replaces cap to meet needs of all, rather than a few.

Revolution from Capitalism to Socialism is inevitable.

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- Why no Marxist Revolution?
 - Fragmentation of the capitalist class
 - A higher standard of living
 - More, better organized worker organizations
 - More extensive legal protection

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- Counterpoint- Wealth remains highly concentrated; white collar jobs offer no more income, security, or satisfaction than blue collar jobs of a century ago.
- Class conflict remains between workers and management.

24 **Weber: Class, Status, Power**

- Weber replaces Marx's two class theory with three kinds of inequality:
 - Class
 - Status

- Power

25 **Socioeconomic status hierarchy (SES)**

- A composite ranking based on various dimensions of social inequality.
- Each of these stand out at different points in the evolution of societies.
 - Status- the main dimensions of difference in agrarian societies
 - Power- important in industrial societies
 - Class- Weber doubted that socialism would really diminish inequality.

26 **Stratification and Technology**

- Structured inequality is minimal in hunting & gathering
- Small elite controls occur within horticulture, agrarian, and pastoral
- Industrialization initially increases inequality, but over time this declines somewhat
- Kusnets Curve (p. 199)

27 **Inequality in the U.S.**

- Highly stratified society, not middle class as many think.
- Important dimensions:
 - Income: U.S. has more income inequality than most other industrial societies
 - Wealth: is distributed less equally than income
 - Power: also unequally distributed

28 **Social classes in U.S.**

- Difficult because of the relatively low level of status consistency and because of social position may change during a person's lifetime.
- Four general rankings:
 - Upper class:
 - Upper-uppers: blue bloods, old money, 1% of society
 - Lower-uppers: majority of upper class, working rich, new money, 3-4% of society

29 **Con't**

- Middle Class:
 - Upper-middle: above average income, more prestigious occupations
 - Average-middle: less prestigious white collar or high skilled blue collar jobs, national average income levels

30 **Con't**

- Working class
 - About one-third of the population (lower middle class), blue collar jobs

31 **Con't**

- Lower class
 - Make up about 20% of the population, lives are unstable and insecure.

32 **Difference class makes**

- Health: upper classes, live on average longer because they eat more nutritious food, live in safer and less stressful environments, receive better medical care.

- 33 **Con't**
- Values and attitudes: upper classes with higher education and financial security are more tolerant. Working class tend to be less tolerant.
 - Family and gender: lower class families tend to be somewhat larger than middle class. Working class encourage conventional norms and respect for authority

- 34 **Social Mobility**
- Intragenerational social mobility: change in social position occurring during a person's lifetime.
 - Intergenerational social mobility: upward or downward mobility of children in relation to parents.

- 35 **Social Mobility**
- Four general conclusions:
 - Social mobility among men has been fairly high
 - The long-term trend is social mobility has been upward
 - Within a single generation, social mobility is usually small
 - Social mobility since the 1970's has been uneven

- 36 **Social Mobility**
- "American Dream":
 - Some disturbing trends:
 - For many workers, earnings have stalled
 - Multiple-job holding is up
 - More jobs offer little income
 - Young people are remaining at home

- 37 **Poverty in the U.S.**
- Relative poverty: a deprivation of some people in relation to those who have more
 - Absolute poverty: a deprivation resources that is life-threatening

- 38 **Con't**
- One view of poverty sees the poor as mostly responsible for their own poverty
- The observation can be made that the poor become trapped in a culture of poverty, a lower class subculture that destroy people's ambition.
- Most of the evidence suggests that society is primarily responsible for poverty.

- 39 **Con't**
- Critical evaluation: The reasons that people do not work seem consistent with the "blame society" position. As a category, the working poor involves two-and-a half percent of full time workers who earn so little that they remain poor.

- 40 **Homelessness**
- There is no precise count of homeless people, but perhaps as many as 1.5 million people are homeless at some time during the course of a year. Both personality traits and societal factors are among the causes of homelessness