

CHAPTER 8

SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION AND STRATIFICATION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading and studying the textbook and this study guide, you should be able to:

1. Define social stratification and critique its effect.
2. Compare and contrast the terms inequality, social differentiation, and social stratification.
3. Elaborate on Lenski's different types of societies and the stratification system characteristics of each.
4. List and define the two basic types of stratification systems and give an example of each.
5. Discuss Weber's ideas about the three sources of power in society and the relationships among those three sources.
6. Compare and contrast the structural-functionalist and the conflict theories of social stratification.
7. Examine and describe the patterns of inequality in the distribution of income and wealth in the United States.
8. Describe social status in American society.
9. Discuss the state of class consciousness in the United States today.
10. Describe poverty in the United States; explain who the poor are, and how they can be helped.
11. Compare and contrast the level of poverty in the United States with the level of poverty of selected other countries listed in the text.
12. Explain the effects of social inequality in terms of occupation, housing, education, and medical care.
13. Discuss social mobility and its forms.
14. List five factors that have strongly influenced social mobility in the United States.
15. Examine and explain some individual characteristics of upward mobility.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Inequality, a result of the unequal distribution of scarce resources, is found in most, if not all, societies. The introductory issue in this chapter, "The Growth of Income Inequality," examines the secession of America's wealthy from the rest of the nation. This chapter examines the origin, causes, and perpetuation of social stratification, a hierarchical ranking of people according to their wealth or prestige. Stratification affects virtually every aspect of an individual's life; it creates inequality, and inequality profoundly affects one's life chances. Inequality is not a naturally occurring phenomenon; it is socially induced by a social selective process that values some things over others. Types of societies and social differentiation, which is the variation of people based on selected social characteristics, are identified and investigated. Sources of power in a class system, theories of social stratification, and inequality in the United States are major topics of discussion. The chapter concludes by examining social mobility in the United States from structural characteristics of mobility and individual characteristics contributing to upward mobility. The data indicate

that, for the first time, the chances of lower-income groups to achieve a higher social position are becoming less and less possible.

1. Social stratification is a hierarchical system of ranking people according to their wealth or prestige.
 - a. **INEQUALITY**, the unequal distribution of scarce goods or resources, exists in many different types of cultures.
 - b. **SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION**: How people vary according to social characteristics.
 - c. **SOCIAL STRATIFICATION**: How people are ranked according to the scarce resources they control.
2. The research of Lenski has shown that stratification increases as societies grow more complex and wealthy. He has discerned five basic types of societies.
 - a. **HUNTING-AND-GATHERING SOCIETIES**: These consist of fifty or fewer people who live on what they can find to eat. There is little stratification.
 - b. **SIMPLE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETIES**: Farming is the primary occupation; the digging stick is the basic tool. A surplus of food and supplies allows some leisure time. A division of labor exists and, as wealth and status accumulate, a stratification system develops.
 - c. **ADVANCED HORTICULTURAL SOCIETIES**: Farming is still the focus, but includes more advanced techniques of irrigation, terracing, and fertilization. The level of food supply increases—as well as the population. Stratification is much more pronounced than in simple horticulture societies.
 - d. **AGRARIAN SOCIETIES**: Relatively sophisticated technology is developed; a variety of goods are grown; and classes of soldiers and merchants arise. Wealth and power become concentrated, and severe stratification results.
 - e. **INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES**: Mass production technologies, extensive division of labor, enormous wealth, and a much more elaborate stratification system are the hallmarks of this type of society. Durkheim believed that division of labor created **ORGANIC SOLIDARITY** through mutual interdependence.
3. There are two basic types of stratification in the world today.
 - a. In a **CASTE SYSTEM**, social class or *caste* is ascribed at birth. Rank is ascribed on the basis of religious or individual or family position. This system is very rigid and is a **CLOSED SYSTEM**.
 - b. In a **CLASS SYSTEM**, social rank is defined in terms of wealth and income. There is movement between classes. This system is an **OPEN SYSTEM**.
4. According to Weber, three scarce resources are sources of power: social class, status, and party.
 - a. **SOCIAL CLASS** is based on wealth, the power derived from wealth, and “life chances” to acquire wealth.
 - b. **SOCIAL STATUS** is a function of the honor and prestige a person receives from others in the community.
 - c. A **PARTY** is an organization in which decisions are made to reach the group’s goals; membership in a party can often enhance one’s social status.
 - d. Sociologists use the concept of socioeconomic status (SES) to assess status, basing the measure on a person’s income, education, and occupation.
5. Why are societies stratified? This question has been debated by early sociologists, with Spencer arguing for “survival of the fittest” and Marx arguing the opposing view that stratification would eventually create revolution. These two positions have influenced the present positions of the structural-functional and conflict theory.
 - a. According to structural-functional theory, stratification is necessary for society to function. Inequality is created by the needs of the society, not by the desires and needs of individuals. If society had an equal need for all types of work, then all its members would be equal. Those who perform important social roles should receive large rewards.
 - b. Conflict theory argues that inequality arises when one group acquires more resources than other groups.

- Once a dominant group gets power, a group legitimates its power and makes it acceptable by appealing to the values of the masses.
 - These beliefs and perceptions, when accepted by the masses, become the prevailing IDEOLOGY that refers to our ideas of society.
 - If the masses are influenced by elite ideology, they are said to have FALSE CONSCIOUSNESS; if they are aware of the fate of their own class, they are said to have CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS.
- c. The text presents a synthesis of Spencer and Marx's ideas, because neither theory fully explains how stratification systems develop.
6. In examining inequality in the United States, the distribution of income and wealth indicate great division, even though our society is predominantly a class system.
- a. A higher social status has always been conferred on people on the basis of their wealth.
 - b. Distinctions between the wealthy and the worker (class consciousness) have been quite substantial in the past, but during the 1980s Americans appeared to be uninterested in any governmental action to reduce inequality; as a result, the rich continue to get richer while the poor continued to suffer.
7. Inequality and life chances in the United States are examined by comparing occupations, housing and lifestyle, education, and medical care All indicate great disparity between the classes.
8. SOCIAL MOBILITY, changing one's social position, occurs in a variety of ways:
- a. UPWARD MOBILITY: The change to a higher rank.
 - b. DOWNWARD MOBILITY: Movement to a lower rank.
 - c. INTRAGENERATIONAL MOBILITY: The change of people's class or status within their own lifetime experience.
 - d. INTERGENERATIONAL MOBILITY: The movement between generations, usually measured by comparing the positions of parents and children.
9. Structural characteristics of mobility in the United States indicate that mobility in this country is influenced by numerous factors, including:
- a. growth of large corporations
 - b. increased standard of living
 - c. growth of urban areas
 - d. maintenance of a split labor market, wherein some jobs afford upward mobility and others do not
 - e. advanced technology, such as the use of computers and robots
10. Individual characteristics and upward mobility have been studied by examining the influence of such factors as family background, grades in school, years of education, and attitudes. It appears that the most important determinant of class position in this country is family background.

KEY TERMS

advanced horticultural societies	industrial societies	power
agrarian societies	inequality	simple horticultural societies
caste system	intergenerational mobility	social class
class consciousness	intragenerational mobility	social differentiation
class system	legitimate	social status
closed system	life chances	social stratification
division of labor	mechanical solidarity	socioeconomic status (SES)
downward mobility	open system	split labor market
false consciousness	organic solidarity	upward mobility
hunting-and-gathering societies	party	
ideology	poverty	

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Differentiate between the terms inequality, social differentiation, and social stratification.
2. List and discuss the five basic types of societies.
3. Identify the two types of stratification in the world today and the societies in which they occur.
4. Discuss Weber's ideas about the three sources of power in society.
5. Compare and contrast the structural-functionalist and the conflict theories of social stratification.
6. Describe the patterns of inequality in the United States by discussing the distribution of income and wealth.
7. Describe poverty in the United States by identifying the poor and explaining how they can be helped.
8. Discuss the effects of social inequality in terms of occupation, housing, education, and medical care.
9. Define the various types of social mobility.
10. List five factors that have strongly influenced social mobility in the United States.

TEST QUESTIONS

Multiple Choice: Choose the response that best answers each question or completes each statement.

1. The unequal distribution of scarce goods or resources:
 - a. is found primarily in postindustrial societies
 - b. reflects the fact that all societies value the same commodities
 - c. results in social inequality
 - d. is dysfunctional for all people in a society
2. How people vary according to social characteristics is known as:
 - a. social differentiation
 - b. social stratification
 - c. social roles
 - d. social status
3. The research of Lenski demonstrates that:
 - a. stratification decreases as societies become more wealthy
 - b. stratification increases as societies become industrialized
 - c. stratification decreases as societies become industrialized
 - d. stratification decreases with a greater division of labor in the work force
4. The greatest degree of stratification is found in _____ societies.
 - a. simple horticultural
 - b. advanced horticultural
 - c. agrarian
 - d. industrial
5. Societies with the least complex division of labor are known as:
 - a. agrarian societies
 - b. horticultural societies

- c. hunting-and-gathering societies
 - d. industrial societies
6. Durkheim argued that an increased division of labor created:
- a. organic solidarity
 - b. organic disintegration
 - c. mechanical solidarity
 - d. mechanical disintegration
7. The two basic types of stratification are:
- a. caste and class
 - b. upper and lower
 - c. social status and social class
 - d. social class and social differentiation
8. In a caste system:
- a. class does not exist
 - b. class is ascribed at birth
 - c. class is achieved
 - d. classes are fluid
9. Social class, according to Weber, is based upon:
- a. wealth
 - b. life chances to accumulate wealth
 - c. religious affiliation
 - d. both "a" and "b"
10. Social status refers to:
- a. accumulated wealth
 - b. accumulated consumer goods
 - c. honor and prestige given by the community
 - d. life chances to improve income
11. The term party, according to Weber, refers to:
- a. involvement or political activity in various organizations
 - b. the activities that occur on the weekends on most college campuses
 - c. the only source of power
 - d. a group first developed in hunting-and-gathering societies
12. Opportunities that people have to improve their income are termed:
- a. social class
 - b. life chances
 - c. contacts
 - d. connections
13. Income, education, and occupation are used to obtain a measure of a person's:
- a. party
 - b. status
 - c. class
 - d. socioeconomic status
14. According to structural-functional theory:
- a. stratification is an unnecessary aspect of society
 - b. society has an equal need for all types of work
 - c. stratification and inequality are created by the needs of society
 - d. stratification is due to people's desire for power

15. Conflict theory argues that:
 - a. inequality and stratification result from people's desire for scarce resources
 - b. groups compete for scarce resources
 - c. powerful groups controls scarce resources and strive to maintain their status advantages
 - d. all of the above
16. If the masses are influenced by elite ideology, they have what Marx called:
 - a. class consciousness
 - b. caste consciousness
 - c. false consciousness
 - d. political consciousness
17. When the masses become aware of their own interests, they have developed:
 - a. class consciousness
 - b. false consciousness
 - c. ideology
 - d. socioeconomic status
18. In examining the distribution of income and wealth in the United States, which of the following is most true?
 - a. a relatively small percentage of the population has a relatively large proportion of the income and wealth
 - b. a relatively large percentage of the population controls a relatively large proportion of the income and wealth
 - c. a relatively large percentage of the population holds a relatively small proportion of the wealth
 - d. income is spread fairly evenly throughout the population
19. A study of social status in "Middletown" in the 1980s, following up studies done during the Depression, revealed that class differences:
 - a. were much more clearly pronounced and visible
 - b. had totally disappeared
 - c. were more difficult to identify
 - d. were assigned because of wealth
20. Kristy holds a higher social position than her father, Ken. She has experienced:
 - a. intergenerational mobility
 - b. intragenerational mobility
 - c. horizontal mobility
 - d. downward mobility
21. Kirby took a job as a corporate executive after two years of selling household products. Kirby has experienced:
 - a. intragenerational mobility
 - b. intergenerational mobility
 - c. upward mobility
 - d. downward mobility
22. Keary's high income family background stressed maximum educational achievement, competence, and upward mobility. Keary now holds a prominent corporate position. This example supports the perspective of _____ theory.
 - a. conflict
 - b. structural-functional

- c. deviance
- d. symbolic interaction

True/False: Record whether each of the following statements is true (T) or false (F).

- _____ 1. Inequality is found only in agrarian and industrial societies.
- _____ 2. Social stratification refers to a system of ranking.
- _____ 3. Stratification decreases as societies become more industrial.
- _____ 4. The greatest equality is found in hunting-and-gathering societies.
- _____ 5. Advanced horticultural societies have more advanced technology than agrarian societies and are therefore more stratified.
- _____ 6. A stratified system does not exist in the simple horticultural societies.
- _____ 7. In the purest form of a class system, wealth determines class.
- _____ 8. In open societies, classes are fluid.
- _____ 9. Caste systems allow no social mobility.
- _____ 10. Closed systems do not exist in today's world.
- _____ 11. Power is a result of the consolidation of class, status, and party.
- _____ 12. Because of their lower income, priests, ministers, and college professors have a relatively low status in our society.
- _____ 13. A person's status is very closely related to his/her wealth.
- _____ 14. Parties, according to Weber, are important social events.
- _____ 15. Conflict theorists argue that because stratification is so persistent, it must be functional for societies.
- _____ 16. Functionalists argue that inequality results because of people's desire for power.
- _____ 17. Because of income distribution, there is greater equality in the United States than in European countries.
- _____ 18. Today, according to the research, it is easier to assign status on the basis of wealth than in previous decades.
- _____ 19. Americans are said to be extremely class conscious.
- _____ 20. Research supports the idea that during the 1980s, the rich did get richer and the poor got poorer.
- _____ 21. A split labor market occurs when some jobs provide upward mobility and others do not.
- _____ 22. The research of Sewell and others found a strong relationship between attitude and success.
- _____ 23. The advancement of women and blacks demonstrates that advanced education guarantees upward mobility.

Matching: Choose the item in the second column that best describes each item in the first column.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| _____ 1. ideology | a. some jobs afford upward mobility, others do not |
| _____ 2. power | b. a social ranking based on wealth, power, and life chances to acquire wealth |
| _____ 3. social class | c. characterized by an extensive division of labor, much wealth, and mass- production technology |
| _____ 4. Legitimation | d. ranking is fixed at birth based on ascribed characteristics |
| _____ 5. caste system | e. comprised of class, status, and party |
| _____ 6. industrial society | f. a process of making the power of the dominant group acceptable to the masses |
| _____ 7. split-labor market | g. ideas and beliefs about how society functions |

Completion: Provide the word(s) that best completes the statement.

1. The opportunities that people have to improve their income are known as _____.
2. A _____ is an organization in which people can develop power and increase their social status.
3. The measure that considers income, education, and occupation in assessing status is _____.
4. The theory that states that stratification is necessary in society because it meets social needs is _____.
5. People who have an awareness of the fate of their own class have what is called _____.

STUDENT CLASS PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Using theories, concepts, facts, and discussions found in this chapter, as well as from other sources, write a proposal for a long-term plan that would reduce income inequality in our nation. Write your proposal as if you were going to present it to Congress. Document your facts and figures and present compelling evidence and information supporting your proposal. You must give sufficient goals and objectives of your proposal and provide proof that your plan is a feasible one.
2. Examine social stratification in either your own hometown, or the town/city in which you now reside. Conduct a driving route which will take you into a variety of neighborhoods that represent the four social classes as discussed in the text. You can probably secure census track data that will be particularly helpful for this project. Drive through the various neighborhoods, recording the characteristics of the

neighborhoods, the type of housing, probable lifestyles, the streets and the condition of the streets, the landscaping, any vehicles, and any other signs that would indicate social class. Look for symbols of wealth or poverty, such as fences, recreational facilities, statues, flagpoles, water fountains, trees, and noise level, or the absence of such. Record anything unique or special about each neighborhood. Look for children in the neighborhoods and describe the children and their activities. Look for signs of conspicuous consumption and/or conspicuous waste. Submit a five-page paper describing each neighborhood using the above information as specific guidelines for the descriptions. In the writing of your project, focus on what you learned and how you felt about conducting this project.

3. Research the War on Poverty government program introduced during the presidency of Lyndon Johnson (many of the original WOP programs are still in effect today in the United States). Provide: (1) a historical background of the program; (2) information about the political climate at the time the program was developed; (3) the definition and the nature of each of the specific programs included in the War on Poverty; (4) an evaluation of each specific program, noting (a) the effectiveness of each one, and (b) the effectiveness of the overall War on Poverty; (5) an examination of the events that influenced the success or non-success of the program. Include any other information that is instructive to your understanding of this policy. In the bibliography, provide at least three different references.

ANSWERS

Multiple Choice

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. c | 2. a | 3. b | 4. d | 5. c |
| 6. a | 7. a | 8. b | 9. d | 10. c |
| 11. a | 12. a | 13. d | 14. c | 15. d |
| 16. c | 17. a | 18. a | 19. c | 20. a |
| 21. c | 22. a | | | |

True-False

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. F | 2. T | 3. F | 4. T | 5. F |
| 6. F | 7. T | 8. T | 9. T | 10. F |
| 11. T | 12. F | 13. T | 14. F | 15. F |
| 16. F | 17. F | 18. F | 19. F | 20. T |
| 21. T | 22. F | 23. F | | |

Matching

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1. g | 2. e | 3. b | 4. f | 5. d |
| 6. c | 7. a | | | |

Completion

1. life chances
2. party
3. socioeconomic status
4. structural-functionalist theory
5. class consciousness