STRATIFICATION = LAYERING

G. Social Stratification

1. a. Social Stratification is the categorization of people into a social hierarchy.

b. Stratification is defined materially by access to resources that relate to Standard of living and social position (status).

c. Stratification is represented symbolically through socially constructed rankings of social status (for example, by “occupational prestige”).

d. Stratification is culturally universal. All human societies develop stratification systems, although they don’t always look the same.
G. Social Stratification

2. The Structure of Stratification
   a. How is it Measured?
      “SES” = Socio-Economic Status
      The idea behind SES comes from Max Weber’s famous essay on *Class, Status and Party* (1893).
      (Property, Prestige, Potential)
      \[\text{or} \quad (\text{Money, Respect, Power})\]

   i. Income and wealth (Money)
      - Income: occupational wages and earnings from investments
      - Wealth: the total value of money and other assets, minus any debt

   ii. Political position of authority (Power)
      - Power is “the ability to control your fate and the fate of others, even in the face of resistance.” (Weber, 1893)
      - Examples:
        - Parents have authority over children
        - Police officers have authority to use force when necessary
        - A Supreme Court Justice has authority to interpret the law

   iii. Social prestige (Respect)
      - Educational level – PhD, JD, MD, MBA, MA, BS, BA, AA, GED
      - Job-related status – “occupational prestige”
      - Honor; fame; celebrity – “positive sanctions”

G. Social Stratification

2. Structure: Measuring Stratification
   a. SES = Socio-Economic Status: Money, Power, Respect
      i. Income and wealth (Money)
         - Income: occupational wages and earnings from investments
         - Wealth: the total value of money and other assets, minus any debt
      ii. Political position of authority (Power)
         - Power is “the ability to control your fate and the fate of others, even in the face of resistance.” (Weber, 1893)
         - Examples:
           - Parents have authority over children
           - Police officers have authority to use force when necessary
           - A Supreme Court Justice has authority to interpret the law
      iii. Social prestige (Respect)
         - Educational level – PhD, JD, MD, MBA, MA, BS, BA, AA, GED
         - Job-related status – “occupational prestige”
         - Honor; fame; celebrity – “positive sanctions”

G. Social Stratification

2.b. Different Structures of Social Stratification
   i. Caste System
      A system based on *ascribed status*: birth determines social position. The goal is a closed system that maintains order and stability in society.
      Example: India
   ii. Estate System
      A system based on one’s relationship to territory and land. Three positions exist: Political and Military Elite (Nobility), Landowners (Gentry) and Religious Leaders (Clergy), and Serfs and Peasants (Commoners)
      Examples: Feudal Europe, China, or Japan
   iii. Class System
      A system based on *achieved status*, not ascription. The goal is an open system of equal opportunity to achieve economic & social mobility.
      Example: America – is the U.S. an ideal class system?

   Note that these are *ideal types* (norms) of social stratification for any society; usually, the reality of social organization introduces elements of more than one type of stratification into a society.
G. Social Stratification


a. The Social Upper Class = 1% of the U.S. population
   "Old Money" (inherited); The Power Elite; includes top 10% in past 30 years;
top 1% earn nearly all of all business profits

b. The Middle Class = 40% of the U.S. population
   White/Gray Collar workers; Income = $50K - $250K; education is important

b. The Lower Class (or "Underclass") = 20% of the U.S. population
   Working poor - low-skill service work; few opportunities for education
   Welfare poor - no work; not a stable population; welfare programs

---

G. Social Stratification


e. Measure of equality using "Quintiles"
   Break society equally into fifths: 1/5 = 20% (20/100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population of Earners</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>20%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top Q</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Q</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Q</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Q</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Q</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Concentration of Wealth

$85%$ $20%$ $5%$ $1%$ $-1%$

---

G. Social Stratification
IF U.S. LAND WERE DIVIDED LIKE U.S. WEALTH

1% WOULD OWN THIS
9% WOULD OWN THIS
30% WOULD OWN THIS
20% WOULD OWN THIS
40% WOULD Own This Red Dot

G. Social Stratification

The wealth gap between upper- and middle-income families is growing
Median net worth of families, in 2014 dollars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Upper</th>
<th>Mids</th>
<th>Lower</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>$90,057</td>
<td>$98,485</td>
<td>$18,064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>$60,100</td>
<td>$729,800</td>
<td>$323,402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>$96,879</td>
<td>$11,544</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Share of adults living in middle-income households is falling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Lowest</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Upper</th>
<th>Highest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Adults are excluded if income is based on both union and non-union household income in the calendar year prior to the survey year. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the Current Population Survey by Adam Looney and Center for Equitable Growth

Figure 1
Most Americans Born at the Bottom of the Income Ladder Never Reach the Middle Rung
Percent of Americans raised in the bottom income quintile who stay put or move up as adults

- Top quintile: 4%
- 4th quintile: 9%
- Middle quintile: 17%
- 2nd quintile: 70% remain below the middle
- Bottom quintile: 43%
G. Social Stratification

4.a. Theories of Stratification Types: Functionalism vs. Neo-Marxism

i. 1920s - late 1960s: **Structural-Functionalists** believe that stratification is a function of social values. Society values some positions more than others (for example doctors vs. maintenance workers).

Classic Structuralism: *Social Class in America* (1957 sociology film)

But many have been quick to point out that these values do not always function well for society. For example, **compare celebrity salaries to those of hard working, important people like the President.**

ii. late 1960s-2000s: **Social Conflict theorists** believe that social stratification is based on how power is distributed in society.

Karl Marx argued that in capitalist nations, power is represented by ownership. Neo-Marxists accept this premise.

Who owns American society? (Carlin)

How do the elite maintain their power? (Chomsky)

Only 2 Social Classes: The Political Class (20%); Everyone Else (80% Obedient Workers)

G. Social Stratification

4.a.ii. The Marxist Perspective: Conflict Theory

1. One's position in life are tied to a person's relationship to the **Means of Production** (the factory system in Marx's time)

The result is only **Two Social Classes**:

A person either controls money and equipment (BOURGEOISIE – owners) or works for those who do (PROLETARIAT - workers)

2. Eventually, years of class oppression will lead to capitalism's demise through **WORKER REVOLUTION**

   - CAPITALISM is replaced by SOCIALISM; workers own factories
   - SOCIALISM then leads to COMMUNISM; ownership becomes obsolete (the state will "wither away")

3. In the 1960s **neo-Marxism** was embraced by liberal college professors to engage in a discussion of the power structure of American society (in response to the 1950s “Red Scare” anti-communist propaganda), the Vietnam War, and the nuclear weapons build-up of the Cold War, as well as domestic issues like poverty and increasing crime rates. From this frame of analysis came feminism, environmentalism, and other social movements.

G. Social Stratification

5.a. Why No Workers' Revolution in America?

i. War and nationalism

   - The anxiety of World Wars I and II kept people from revolting

   - We can ALL have a piece of the pie these days (in stock)

   - More prestige (status) for workers;

   - Better wages and benefits: work hours, child labor laws, eliminated sweatshops, increased safety, introduced minimum wage

   - Nonetheless, there is continual resurgence of socialism in America: 1880s, 1920s, 1960s, today?!

   - To Arms! Follow your Thinks

   - Are they a bunch of dirty hippies or just a part of a bigger picture?
5.b. Capitalism has created great inequality in the U.S., developing a caste-like system. How are the classes perpetuated (or made like castes)?

i. Wealth and power is highly concentrated in the upper class (the top 1%). A very small percentage of the population still controls over half of the corporate stock. Inheritance laws (law estate taxes) keep money in the upper class.

ii. The law favors the rich

iii. The educational system reproduces class inequality

iv. Some ascribed statuses lead to different treatment due to problematic social norms:

   Women, minorities and people of color are victims of status discrimination