

## Ch. 8 notes

### Social Stratification

**The power of society:** what are a person's odds of being born into poverty?

- Highest: Hispanic single mother
- Lowest: White married couple

#### **Social stratification**

- System by which a society ranks categories of people in a hierarchy
- Based on four important principles
  - Is a trait of society
  - Persists over generations
  - Is universal but variable
  - Involves not just inequality, but beliefs

#### **Caste and Class Systems**

- Caste system: social stratification based on ascription, or birth
  - Birth determines social position in four ways
    - Occupation
    - Marriage within caste
    - Social life restricted to "own kind"
    - Belief systems often tied to religious dogma
  - In India
    - Caste has given way to a class system
    - Achievement plays a greater part in social ranking
    - Income and consumption are keys to social standing
  - Limited social mobility and high status consistency
- Class system: social stratification based on both birth and individual achievement
  - Meritocracy: social stratification based on personal merit
  - Social mobility: change in position within the social hierarchy
  - Status consistency: degree of uniformity in a person's social standing across various dimensions of social inequality
  - Greater mobility and less status consistency
  - How does this system work?
    - Social mobility is possible for people with education and skills
    - All people gain equal standing before the law
    - Work involves some personal choice
- In the UK
  - Aristocratic England: caste-like system of aristocracy
  - Estates
    - First estate: Church leaders
    - Second estate: Aristocracy
    - Third estate: Commoners
  - The UK today
    - Evidence of caste elements

- Commoners' control of government
- Mixed caste elements and meritocracy

-In the USSR (past)

- Feudal estate system
- Russian revolution
  - Apparatchiks
  - Intelligentsia
  - Manual Workers
  - Rural peasants
- Modern Russian Federation: perestroika "restructuring"
- Structural social mobility
  - Shift in social position of large numbers of people
  - Due more to societal changes than to individual efforts

-China

- Revolution in 1949 to current
  - Mao Zedong: all types of work equally important
  - Deng Xiaoping: new class of business owners
  - Jinping: small group of wealthy elites
- Modern china
  - Structured upward mobility
  - Emerging new class system
  - Expanding economy
  - Returning "hiao gui" (educated Chinese from overseas)

**Ideology**

- Cultural beliefs that justify particular social arrangements, including patterns of inequality

**Explaining stratification**

-Structural-functional theory

- The Davis-Moore thesis
  - The greater the importance of a position, the more rewards a society attaches to it
  - Egalitarian societies offer little incentive for people to try their best
  - A society considered more important must reward enough to draw talented people

-Oprah Winfrey reported income of \$165 million in 2011

-Guided by the Davis-Moore thesis, why would societies reward some people with so much more fame and fortune than others?

-Social-Conflict Theories

- Karl Marx: Class conflict
  - Most people have one of two relationships to the means of production
  - Capitalist society reproduces the class structure in each new generation
  - Capitalism creates great inequality in power and wealth
  - Oppression would drive working majority to organize and overthrow capitalism

-Social-conflict theories

- Had enormous influence on sociological thinking
- Offered no reward for individual performance
- Predicted revolutionary change that did not occur

- Industrial workers have not overthrown capitalism
  - Fragmentation of the capitalist class
  - Higher standard of living
  - More worker organizations
  - More extensive legal protections
- Wealth remains highly concentrated
  - White-collar jobs offer no more income, security, or satisfaction than factory work did 100 years ago
  - Current workers' benefits came from struggle
  - Ordinary people still face disadvantages that the law cannot overcome
- Max Weber: class status, and power
  - Social stratification cases three levels of inequality
    - Class position (economic inequality)
    - Status (social prestige)
    - Power
  - Socioeconomic status (SES): composite ranking based on various dimensions of social inequality
  - Inequality in history
    - Each dimensions of social inequality stands out at different points in the evolution of human societies
    - Crucial difference is economic dimension of class
    - Socialism would increase inequality by expanding government and creating a political elite
- Symbolic-interaction Theory
  - Differences in social class position can affect interaction
  - People interact primarily with others of similar social standing
  - Conspicuous consumption involves buying and using products because of the "statement" they make

--<Applying Theory Pg.250>--

- A Global Perspective
  - Hunting and gathering societies
  - Horticultural, pastoral, and agrarian societies
  - Industrial societies
- The Kuznets Curve: Greater technological sophistication generally is accompanied by more pronounced social stratification
- Inequality in the US
  - US society
    - Highly stratified
    - Rich have most of money, enjoy best schooling and health, and consume most goods and services

### **Income, wealth, and Power**

- Income: Earning from work or investments
- Wealth: total value of money and other assets, minus outstanding debts
- Occupational Prestige
  - Work generates social prestige
  - In any society, high-prestige occupations go to privileged categories of people