

**SociologicalYOU - Chapter 8 Audio Lecture Transcript**

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This is Next-Gen Introductory Sociology.

Welcome to Chapter 8: Stratification.

There are five modules in this chapter. They are:

Module 1: The Sociological Perspective on Social Class

Module 2: The Inequality of Social Stratification

Module 3: Problems of Stratification

Module 4: The American Dream

Module 5: Stratification and Social Change

This PowerPoint does not cover every key term in Chapter 8. Please read your textbook to see what is not covered in the PowerPoint.

As we review the contents of this chapter, I would encourage you to consider the following points to ponder. These should help you think critically about stratification.

First, how does socioeconomic status impact our everyday lives?

Next, why is it important to understand that the wealth gap between the rich and the poor is growing wider?

Finally, does everyone have an equal chance of moving up a social class and achieving social mobility?

**Module 1: The Sociological Perspective**

There are a number of key terms important to understanding social class from a sociological perspective, beginning with social class. For our purposes a social class is defined as a category of people with similar status, culture and wealth.

Class consciousness is an awareness of one's social category within a social hierarchy.

Social status is an individual's position or rank within a social system. Social stratification is a system in which categories of people are ranked in a hierarchy.

Socioeconomic status or SES refers to an individual's social position based upon education, occupation, income and place of residence.

Finally, income is money earned on a regular basis through work.

Within social class there are different categories of workers. A blue collar worker is an individual who engages in manual labor, a pink collar worker is an individual who works in women-dominated jobs with low pay and a white-collar worker is an individual who is employed in a salaried professional, managerial or administrative position.

Additional key terms associated with social class include wealth, the total of all personal assets, including property investments and income, power, the ability to exert control over others and achieve goals with or without the support of society.

Prestige is the level of esteem and respect afforded an individual often associated with one's occupation or membership in a group or organization. Occupational prestige is a consensus of the value of a job or profession.

The primary means of determining social class is by assessing socioeconomic status. SES consists of determining income, educational attainment, occupational prestige and where an individual lives.

Max Weber included wealth, power and prestige as additional means of defining social

class. A person's occupation, whether it falls into the categories of blue, pink or white collar worker, also establishes social class.

Whether we are aware of it or not, social class impacts all of our social encounters.

Individuals often attempt to assess the social status and class of others in order to respond accordingly during the social interaction.

**Module 2: Social Structures**

Module 2 looks at systems of stratification; systems of stratification can be open or closed.

An open system is a system that encourages and allows for social mobility. A closed system is a social system that does not allow for social mobility.

There are four social systems of stratification.

1. Slavery: slavery is a type of closed stratified system in which slaves and owners exist.

2. Caste system. This is a type of closed stratified system in which people are designated to a particular social position based on their parents' status in the society.

3. Estate system: this is a type of closed stratified system in which wealthy landowners and peasants exist.

4. Class system, which is a type of open stratified system that allows social mobility.

The slavery system is a closed system and although slavery is illegal around the world, modern slavery still exists in countries such as Mauritania.

Primarily found in India, the caste system is a closed system and was ruled illegal in 1950. The lowest caste elites are still discriminated against within many of the social institutions in india.

The estate system that existed primarily during The Middle Ages was a closed system, comprised of wealthy landowners, clergy and peasants.

The social class system is what we find in the United States. It is an open system that allows individuals social mobility.

Table 8.2.1 offers a side-by-side comparison of the four systems of social stratification.

Key terms that are important to know when analyzing systems of stratification include, but are not limited to, ascribe status.

Ascribed status is a position within a social system that is assigned based upon characteristics such as sex, race or economics.

Achieved status is a position within a social system that is gained through merit.

Triple oppression refers to the combined characteristics of being a woman, poor and a minority.

An American Dream, this is a commonly held belief in the US suggesting that anyone can overcome obstacles and get ahead in life through hard work and determination.

Let's look more closely at social classes in the United States by looking at the key terms associated with the various categories. These include upper class, middle class and lower class. Upper class is a category of people who maintain the highest status and resources within a society.

Middle class is the category of people at the center within a social hierarchy and lower class is the lowest category of people within a social hierarchy.

It's also important to consider the federal poverty line and the working poor. The federal poverty line is a governmental standard of measurement indicating the income level at which an individual or family is designated as poor.

The working poor are individuals who spend more than 27 weeks per year in the paid labor force and live below the poverty line.

The upper class is considered the top 5% of incomes and there is a concentration of wealth among this social class. The top 1% own about 43 % of the total wealth in the United States, while the bottom 80% of Americans only hold about 7% of the total wealth.

The middle class is a shrinking category. The lower class struggles financially and approximately 15% of the US population is considered poor.

**Module 3: Social Problems**

This module gives us an opportunity to examine the types of poverty and its cyclical nature, beginning with the poverty rate. The poverty rate is the percentage of people who are considered poor.

Poverty is categorized as either absolute or relative. Absolute poverty is a threshold in which an individual or family does not have enough resources to meet their basic survival needs.

Relative poverty is a subjective level at which an individual or family experiences a deprived lifestyle.

Absolute poverty is the lowest rung on the stratification scale and refers to those who are unable to sustain a basic level of survival in terms of food, shelter and clothing. Those in relative poverty are able to meet their survival needs but are unable to obtain the lifestyle standard to which they aspire.

Module 3 presents two theories in relation to global poverty. They are Modernization Theory and Dependency Theory.

Modernization theory is a macro theory, indicating the process by which nations progress through stages of development.

Dependency Theory, also a macro theory, indicates the stratified world economic system keeps peripheral nations dependent on core nations. Both of these theories provide explanations as to why some countries are poor and remain poor, while other countries have developed and become wealthy.

These theories both reflect internal and external causes and reasons for the amount and rate of development within countries.

The Modernization Theory focuses more on internal reasons for development, such as the advancement of culture and technology.

The Dependency Theory focuses on external forces that impact a country's ability to thrive. For example, a peripheral country experiences exploitation by semi-periphery and core nations, thus limiting the potential for advancement and development.

Figure 8.3.2 presents categories of wealth and poverty within the world system analysis.

Problems associated with social stratification include types of inequalities. These are economic or class inequality. Under this category, you will find the Wealth Gap.

The Wealth Gap is the uneven distribution of financial assets and resources in a society that result from the concentration of money in the hands of a small segment of the population.

There is also racial inequality, gender inequality and educational inequality. Stratification exists throughout society and has a range of impacts all of which result in some form of inequality.

Economic inequality is the result of the concentration of wealth among few members of a society.

Racial inequality occurs when the access to success in society is blocked to certain individuals based on their race or ethnicity.

Gender inequality is the result of unequal pay between men and women, even when they are performing the same task. Frequently, gender inequality includes a racial component, such that minority women are often paid less than their white female counterparts.

Educational inequality includes not only the uneven distribution of resources in

schools, but also the long-term implications of lower educational levels on the lifetime economic earnings of those with less education.

**Module 4: The Sociological Imagination**

This module looks at social mobility and an individual's life chances.

For our purposes social mobility is defined as an individual or group's movement up or

down the system of stratification in a society. Life chances are the opportunities and resources a person has at their disposal to improve their quality of life.

Cultural capital refers to the information, knowledge and ideas that a person uses to support their social mobility.

Social capital is the network of links that develop between people which may result in personal, social and professional advantage.

The digital divide is the access to an ability to use technology, like computers and the internet.

People move up or down in the system of stratification.

An individual's social position is greatly enhanced by life chances or access to opportunities and resources.

Social mobility is further supported by their cultural capital and the ability to cross the digital divide. Social mobility can occur in a variety of different ways.

Vertical mobility is movement up or down the system of stratification.

Horizontal mobility is movement within a layer of the system of stratification.

Intergenerational mobility is an individual's change in social status that results from mobility on a generational level.

Intra-generational mobility is an individual's change in status during a lifetime.

Structural mobility refers to changes in the social position of a group that result from shifts in the larger society.

Vertical mobility involves moving up the system of stratification, while horizontal mobility occurs when an individual changes one position for another without an increase in pay or social position.

By contrast, intra-generational mobility occurs when an individual has a change in social position. This is different from inter-generational mobility, which occurs when there is a generational shift in the system of stratification.

Unlike the other categories, which typically refer to individual or family group action, structural mobility happens when there's a shift in the society that results in whole segments of the population moving up or down the system of stratification.

It is important to consider the experience of women in the system of stratification by

analyzing the feminization of poverty.

The feminization of poverty is the disproportionate number of women amongst the world's poor.The feminization of poverty refers to the stratification experienced by women in society.

Women earn on average 77 cents for every dollar a man makes, are more likely to work in a low-wage job that does not offer health care, and are more likely to live in poverty with their children.

This stratification occurs as a result of policies that allow for gender inequality in the workforce which leads to increased poverty experienced by women in their personal lives.

**Module 5: Social Change**

This module analyzes social policies designed to create change in the system of stratification. An important key term to understand is global inequality.

Global inequality is the stratification that exists between people living in different nations. Efforts to address global inequality include The Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), The United Nations International Children's World Food Program and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Societies offer a variety of responses to social inequality. Programs discussed in this module range from social welfare programs in the United States to global initiatives promoted by the United Nations.

In the US, these efforts are designed primarily to address issues of social inequality that emerge from a system of stratification. By comparison, many of the international programs work towards supplying the basics of food, shelter and clothing that other countries are unable to provide.

This concludes the PowerPoint for **SociologicalYOU** Chapter 8 where we strive to “Connect Sociology and YOU!”

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