

WHAT IS SOCIAL STRATIFICATION? 121

the ranking of people and the rewards they receive based on objective criteria, often including wealth, power, and/or prestige

WHAT ARE THE THEORIES BEHIND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION? 129

functionalism: stratification is the result of some kind of functional balance, is inevitable, and aids in the smooth functioning of society
conflict theory: social inequality is rooted in a system that is more likely to reward you based on where you start than based on your abilities
symbolic interactionism: a person's particular social class affects how he or she discusses class in general

WHAT SOCIAL POLICIES HAVE BEEN CREATED TO EASE POVERTY? 132

U.S. welfare program; Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF); Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC); minimum wage

get the topic: WHAT IS SOCIAL STRATIFICATION?

How Does the United States Define Poverty? 122
 Social Mobility 128

Functionalism 129
 Conflict Theory 130
 Symbolic Interactionism 130

Social Policy: Welfare for the Poor 132
 Social Policy: Minimum Wage 133

Theory

FUNCTIONALISM 129

- social class is connected to a person's ability to negotiate the social world
- intelligence, drive, and personal choice influence a person's social class
- all people are different, so it makes sense that differences in social class exist

CONFLICT THEORY 130

- social mobility rarely occurs in a dramatic way
- generally, one's parents and the opportunities they can provide determine social class
- the higher our socioeconomic status, the less we believe social class matters

SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM 130

- social class and our understanding of it are relative to our personal belief system
- for example, middle-class citizens would not question poor people's behavior if they held similar beliefs about marriage and childbearing
- many poor women think childless people lead empty lives, so they place more emphasis on the maternal relationship than on marriage

Key Terms

social stratification is the ranking of people and the rewards they receive based on an objective criteria, often including wealth, power, and/or prestige. 121

income is the money received for work or through investments. 121

wealth is all of your material possessions, including income. 121

transitional poverty is a temporary state of poverty that occurs when someone loses a job for a short time. 122

marginal poverty is a state of poverty that occurs when a person lacks stable employment. 122

residual poverty is chronic and multigenerational poverty. 122

absolute poverty is poverty so severe that one lacks resources to survive. 122

relative poverty is a state of poverty that occurs when we compare ourselves to those around us. 122

power is the ability to carry out your will and impose it on others. 123

delegated means given or assigned. 123

(continued)

power elite is a small group of people who hold immense power. 123

prestige is the level of esteem associated with one's status and social standing. 123

upper or **elite class** is a social class that is very small in number and holds significant wealth. 124

upper middle class is a social class that consists of high-income members of society who are well educated but do not belong to the elite membership of the super wealthy. 125

middle class is a social class that consists of those who have moderate incomes. 125

working class is a social class generally made up of people with high school diplomas and lower levels of education. 125

lower class is a social class living in poverty. 126

urban underclass is a social class living in disadvantaged neighborhoods that are characterized by four components: poverty, family disruption, male unemployment, and lack of individuals in high-status occupations. 126

social mobility is the ability to change social classes. 128

horizontal mobility refers to moving within the same status category. 128

vertical mobility refers to moving from one social status to another. 128

intragenerational mobility occurs when an individual changes social standing, especially in the workforce. 128

intergenerational mobility refers to the change that family members make from one social class to the next through generations. 128

structural mobility occurs when social changes affect large numbers of people. 128

exchange mobility is a concept suggesting that, within the United States, each social class contains a relatively fixed number of people. 128

meritocracy argument states that those who get ahead do so based on their own merit. 129

entitlement program is a program offering assistance to which a person is entitled, requiring no qualification. 132

Sample Test Questions

These multiple-choice questions are similar to those found in the test bank that accompanies this textbook.

1. People with seasonal jobs most likely experience
 - a. residual poverty.
 - b. absolute poverty.
 - c. marginal poverty.
 - d. transitional poverty.
2. Which of the following is *not* a member of the power elite?
 - a. The Secretary of State
 - b. A military general
 - c. A corporate CEO
 - d. A town mayor
3. Which of the following is true of the upper, or elite, class?
 - a. Most members are newly wealthy.
 - b. They have higher rates of teen pregnancy.
 - c. They make up one percent of the country's population.
 - d. They are generally regarded highly for their specialized skills.
4. A doctor transferring from one hospital to another is an example of
 - a. intergenerational mobility.
 - b. horizontal mobility.
 - c. vertical mobility.
 - d. exchange mobility.
5. A high school graduate who works on an assembly line in a manufacturing plant is most likely a member of which social class?
 - a. Urban underclass
 - b. Working class
 - c. Middle class
 - d. Lower class

ESSAY

1. How does prestige affect one's social standing?
2. How is the mobility of the urban underclass restricted?
3. What is the relationship between social class and education?
4. In terms of marriage and family, how do the values of the low-income single mothers interviewed by Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas differ from the values held by most middle-class women? Why do you think this difference exists?
5. How does the concept of exchange mobility conflict with the beliefs of conflict theorists?

WHERE TO START YOUR RESEARCH PAPER

For more information on working in homeless shelters, including a complete list of shelters, go to

<http://www.artistshelpingchildren.org/shelters.html>

<http://www.hud.gov/>

For more information about hunger and poverty in the world, go to

<http://www.poverty.com/>

For more information about minimum wage laws in the United States, go to <http://www.dol.gov/esa/minwage/america.htm>

To view information collected from a New York Times study of social class, go to <http://www.nytimes.com/pages/national/class/>

Remember to check www.thethinkspot.com for additional information, downloadable flashcards, and other helpful resources.

ANSWERS: 1. c; 2. d; 3. c; 4. b; 5. b