

# Social Stratification

# Standards

- SSSocIC1: Students will analyze forms of social inequality.
  - a. Explain how unequal distribution of power and resources affects the life chances of individuals in that society.
  - b. Analyze the sources and effects of stratification on the basis of social class; race and ethnicity; gender; age; and emotional, mental, and physical disabilities.

# Social Stratification

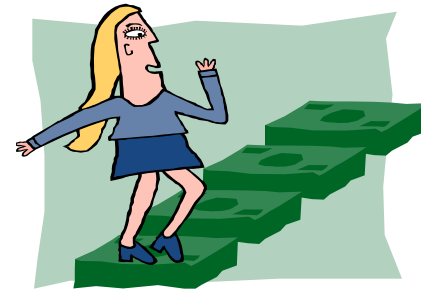
- creation of layers of people who possess unequal shares of scarce resources
- Most important of these resources are

- Income
- Wealth
- Power
- prestige



How is social stratification related to social class?

Each layer in a stratification system is a social class



Social Class	% of Population	Yearly Income
Upper	1%	\$500K +
Upper Middle	15%	\$100K +
Lower Middle	33%	\$30-70K
Working	30%	\$16-30K
Lower	14%	\$16K or less
unemployed, homeless, welfare	1%	\$0 K

# Socioeconomic Status



Are there extremes of income and poverty in the US?

- Income: amount of money received by an individual or group over a specific period of time (paycheck)
- Wealth: total economic resources (what you own)
  - **\$35,000** Basic needs budget for a family of 4
  - **\$22,050** poverty line in 2009
    - 44 million Americans were at or below this line
  - 20% of American families received 49% of the nation's income; Poorest 20% controlled under 4%

- A ranking that combines the following to assess class ranking
  - Income
  - Occupational Prestige
  - Level of Education
  - Neighborhood

INCOME INEQUALITY IS GROWING!  
WHY?



## The Power Dimension



- Can you exercise power without being wealthy?
  - *Expert knowledge* can be used to expand power
  - *Fame* is another base of power
  - Power is attached to social positions that we hold
    - Elected officers in an organization
    - People in power positions in the mass media
  - Overcome lack of wealth if we have large numbers of people on our side or if we are skillful at organizing our resources

## The Prestige Dimension



- **Prestige:** recognition, respect, and admiration attached to a social position
  - Defined by the culture and society
  - Voluntarily given, not acclaimed
    - Scientists cannot proclaim themselves Nobel Prize Winners
  - People in similar levels of prestige share identifiable lifestyles

# Social Structure in America



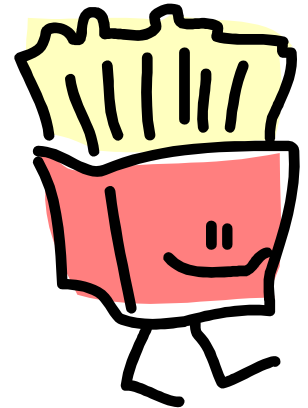
Upper Class- about 1% of the population (Aristocracy)

Middle Class- 40-50%-  
Business owners, teachers,  
nurses (national avg salaries)

Working Class- Lower middle  
class- 33%- Truck drivers,  
salespeople- Unstable  
employment

Working Poor- 13% - low job  
skills, manual workers, service  
workers

Underclass- 12%- Unemployed,  
part time jobs, lack of education,  
public aid, disabilities common





# Poverty in America



- Absolute Poverty

- Not enough money to secure necessary items

- Safe food
- Housing
- clothes

- Relative Poverty

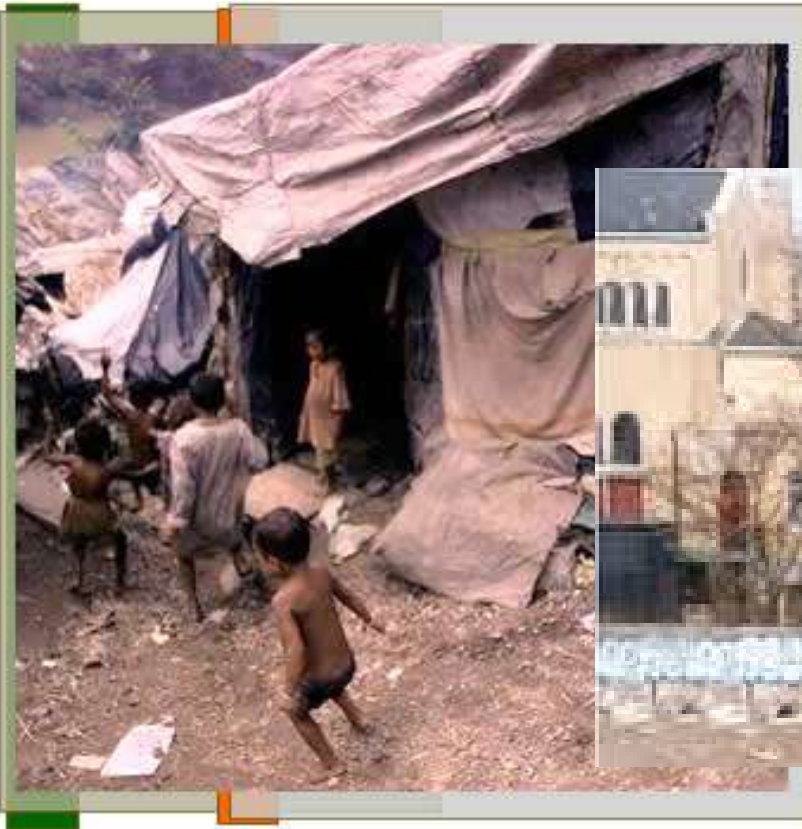
- Enough money to stay alive
- Comparing the economic condition of those at the bottom of society with those in the rest of society
- African Americans, Latinos, women, and children are disproportionately represented



# Relative Poverty

**Calcutta, India**

**Chicago, Illinois**





# Race and Poverty



- 47% of those in poverty are white
- The poverty rate for whites is about 7%

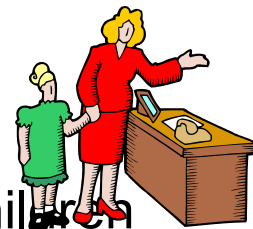


- 47% of those in poverty are African-American or Latino
- The poverty rate for African Americans is about 25%
- The poverty rate for Latinos is about 25%
- In Texas, about 14-17% of people live in poverty



# The Feminization of Poverty

- Female-headed households are disproportionately represented in poverty
  - ½ of all poor households are led by women
  - Only 14% of households NOT in poverty are headed by women
- About 22% of kids under the age of 6 are in poverty
- Women more likely to be in poverty because:
  - Women earn 72¢ for every \$1.00 men earn
  - Women struggle to find affordable child care
  - Women struggle to keep long term jobs and take care of children





# Fixing the Problem



- Government programs: **Social Security and Welfare** aim to help the elderly and those in need with money and food
- Should the goal be strictly aid to the poor, or should the focus also be on job training and education?
- How do we prevent welfare scams and corruption?
- Welfare reforms of the past:
  - Limits on the amount \$ those able to work can receive
  - States can pose limits
  - There can be restrictions to those eligible (like education requirements)
  - Aid can be withdrawn if the person does not get a job within 2 years





# Social Mobility in the U.S.

- How do we move from class to class?
  - **Horizontal mobility:** a move from one job to another within the same class

- Ex. Server  $\longrightarrow$  Taxi driver



- **Vertical mobility:** Changing occupation which leads to a new social class

- If this takes place over a generation it is called **Intergenerational mobility**

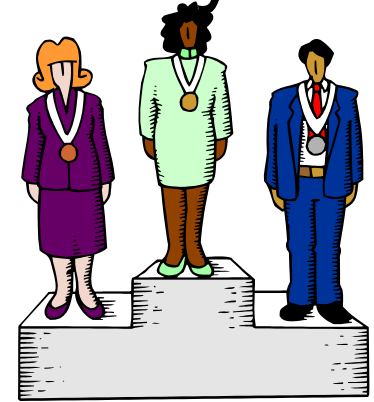
- Grandparents worked in a factory, parents became teachers... what will you be??





# Do people experience mobility?

- In some societies with a caste system, there is no mobility- your family's social standing is your fate.
- We say the U.S. is an open class system- where social class is based on merit and effort... is this true?
- How does one move from lower to upper class? Does the upper class want this?



Abe Lincoln and Henry Ford

