1) Social stratification refers to a socierty’s categorization of it’s people into groups based on socio-economic factors like wealth, income, race, education, gender,occupation and social status or derived power. As such, stratification is the relative social position of persons within a social group, category, geographic region, or social unit.

In modern Western societies, social stratification is typically defined in terms of threesocial classes:

(i) The Upper Class

(ii) The Middle Class &

(iii) The lower class.

In turn, each class can be subdivided into, e.g. the upper-stratum, the middle-stratum, and the lower stratum. Moreover, a social stratum can be formed upon the bases ofkinship, clan, tribe, or caste, or all four.

The categorization of people by social strata occurs most clearly in complex state-based, polycentric, or feudal societies, the latter being based upon socio-economic relations among classes of nobility and classes ofpeasants. Historically, whether or nothunter-gather, tribal, and band societies can be defined as socially stratified, or if social stratification otherwise began with agriculture and large-scale means of social exchange, remains a debated matter in thesocial sciences. Determining the structures of social stratification arises from inequalities of status among persons, therefore, the degree of social inequality determines a person's social stratum. Generally, the greater the social complexity of a society, the more social stratification exists, by way of social differentiation.

**THE CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN THE SOCIETY**

**IT AFFECTS PHYSICAL HEALTH**

A person’s social class has a significant impact on their physical health, their ability to receive adequate medical care and nutrition, and their life expectancy. While gender and race play significant roles in explaining healthcare inequality in the United States, socioeconomic status (SES) is the greatest social determinant of an individual’s health outcome. Social determinants of health are the economic and social conditions that influence individual and group differences in health status. Social determinants are environmental, meaning that they are risk factors found in one’s living and working conditions (including the distribution of income, wealth, influence, and power), rather than individual factors (such as behavioral risk factors or genetics). Social determinants can be used to predict one’s risk of contracting a disease or sustaining an injury, and can also indicate how vulnerable one is to the consequences of a disease or injury. Individuals of lower socioeconomic status have lower levels of overall health, less insurance coverage, and less access to adequate healthcare than those of higher SES. Individuals with a low SES in the United States experience a wide array of health problems as a result of their economic position. They are unable to use healthcare as often as people of higher status and when they do, it is often of lower quality. Additionally, people with low SES tend to experience a much higher rate of health issues than those of high SES. Many social scientists hypothesize that the higher rate of illness among those with low SES can be attributed to environmental hazards. For example, poorer neighborhoods tend to have fewer grocery stores and more fast food chains than wealthier neighborhoods, increasing nutrition problems and the risk of conditions, such as heart disease. Similarly, poorer neighborhoods tend to have fewer recreational facilities and higher crime rates than wealthier ones, which decreases the feasibility of routine exercise.

**IT AFFECTS MENTAL HEALTH**

Mental health describes a level of psychological well-being or the presence/absence of a mental disorder. From the perspective of “positive psychology” or “holism,” mental health may include an individual’s ability to enjoy life and to demonstrate psychological resilience when confronted with challenges. The World Health Organization defines mental health as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. ”

What counts as healthy enjoyment and resilience depends upon one’s class perspective. Members of different classes encounter different stressors—lower class people likely face more financial stress as it pertains to day-to-day sustenance and well-being, while upper class people might experience stress from the intense social pressures associated with elite circles. The evaluation of which mental states can be considered healthy and which require medical intervention also varies by class.

Mental health is a socially constructed and socially defined concept; different societies, groups, cultures, institutions, and professions have very different ways of conceptualizing its nature and causes, determining what is mentally healthy, and deciding what interventions are appropriate. Definitions of mental health depend on cultural understandings in addition to biological and neurological findings. Members of different social classes often hold different views on mental health. Similarly, different social classes have different levels of access to mental health interventions and to information about mental health. Thus, the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders varies widely by social class.

**IT AFFECTS FAMILY LIFE.**

Family life – marriage and childbearing patterns, household composition, and home stability are strongly influenced by social class. In the United States, the probability of a first marriage ending is substantially higher for couples with low socioeconomic statuses than for those in the middle or upper class. Research shows that the higher rates of divorce for individuals in lower social classes can often be attributed to the greater financial stress these couples face, though factors like class expectations can also play a role.

Globally, the birth rate in countries with large impoverished populations is much higher than in wealthier countries, indicating that income and wealth play a role in shaping family structures. Demographers have identified a direct relationship between average number of children per household and the economic development of a nation. Today, less developed countries struggle with overpopulation while many governments in developed countries are instituting policies to deal with low birth rates. In nations with high levels of fertility, upper class individuals tend to have more children than their lower class peers. In nations with low levels of fertility, upper class families exhibit even lower fertility than average.

Social class has both a cause and an effect relationship with family composition. For example, single-parent households are likely to have a lower social class because they violate social norms. At the same time, single-parent families can contribute to financial and social instability. A single parent will often face higher costs (in the form of paid childcare), lower earnings (loss of the second parent’s income or loss of time spent at work), or both.

**IT AFFECTS EDUCATION**

Education is a major component of social class, both directly and indirectly. Directly, individuals from higher social classes are more likely to have the means to attend more prestigious schools, and are therefore more likely to receive higher educations. Indirectly, individuals who benefit from such higher education are more likely to land prestigious jobs, and in turn, higher salaries. Just as education and social class are closely intertwined, stratification in education contributes to stratification in social class.

Educational attainment refers to the level of schooling a person completes for instance, high school, some college, college, or a graduate degree. Upper class individuals are likely to attend schools of higher quality and of greater prestige than those attended by their lower class counterparts. Because members of high social classes tend to be better educated and have higher incomes, they are able to offer greater educational advantages, such as private schooling, to their children as well.

Upper-class parents are better able to send their children not only to exclusive private schools, but also to public state-funded schools. Such schools are likely to be of higher quality in affluent areas than in impoverished ones, since they are funded by property taxes within the school district. Wealthy areas will provide more property taxes as revenue, which leads to higher quality schools. Educational inequality is one factor that perpetuates the class divide across generations.

Such educational inequality is further reinforced by legacy admission, the preference given by educational institutions to applicants who are related to alumni of that institution. Germane to to university and college admissions (particularly in the United States), this practice emerged after World War I, primarily in response to the resulting immigrant influx. Ivy League institutions admit roughly 10% to 30% of students from each incoming class based on this factor.

**IT AFFECTS POLITICS**

Social class impacts one’s level of political participation and political influence. Political participation refers to whether or not a person votes in elections, donates to campaigns, or attends public forums where decisions are made, such as town meetings or city council meetings, for example. Political influence refers to the extent to which one’s political participation achieves its desired results. For example, if one attends a public forum, is their opinion likely to be heard, or if they donate money, is a politician likely to support their desired policy?

Using America as an example, well-educated Americans are more likely to vote and to donate money to politicians than lower class individuals. This trend means that middle and upper class individuals have greater political participation and greater political influence than those in lower positions. Additionally, higher status people are more likely to hold political positions than lower class people. An illustration of this is the presidential election between George W. Bush and John Kerry in 2004. Both had millions of dollars of accumulated wealth, and they had higher degrees from Harvard and Yale, respectively.

2.) What is Social Mobility?

Social mobility refers to the shift in an individual’s social status from one status to another. The shift can either be higher, lower, inter-generational, and intra-generational, and it cannot be determined if the change is for good or bad.

**Types of Social Mobility**

Social mobility can take different forms, and people can experience different types of mobility in different stages of their lives. The type of mobilities are now independent of one another and can often overlap. They are only distinguished for the purpose of analysis.

**HORIZONTAL MOBILITY**

It occurs when a person changes their occupation but their overall social standing remains unchanged. For example, if a doctor goes from practicing medicine to teaching in a medical school, the occupation’s changed but their prestige and social standing remains the same. Sorokin describes horizontal mobility as a change in religious, territorial, political, or for family and other horizontal shifts with no change in the vertical position.

**VERTICAL MOBILITY**

It refers to a change in the occupational, political, or religious status of a person that causes a change in their societal position. An individual or social object moves from one social stratum to another. Vertical mobility can be ascending or descending.

Ascending involves an individual moving from a group in a lower stratum to a higher one or the creation of a similar group with a higher societal position, instead of side by side with its existing group. Descending mobility occurs for example when a businessman incurs losses in his business and is forced to declare bankruptcy, resulting in a move to a lower stratum of society.

**UPWARD MOBILITY**

It is when a person moves from a lower position in society to a higher one. It can also include people occupying higher positions in the same societal group. However, upward mobility, while seen as a good thing, can also come at a cost for individuals.

When a person moves upwards, they need to leave behind familiar surroundings such as family and places. They may also need to change their way of thinking and behavior. The individual will need to adapt to the new environment as a result of their upward movement and adopt different behaviors in the new society.

**DOWNWARD MOBILITY**

Downward mobility takes place when a person moves from a higher position in society to a lower one. It can occur when someone is caught performing a wrongful act that can result in the loss of the position they currently hold.

Downward mobility can be extremely stressful for people who face a rapid decline in their social status; they may find it hard to adapt to the new environment as it is not similar to the standard of living they are used to. Downward mobility is an example of the extent to which a society values equal opportunity and structure.

**INTER-GENERATIONAL MOBILITY**

Inter-generational mobility happens when the social position changes from one generation to another. The change can be upward or downward. For example, a father worked in a factory while his son received an education that allowed him to become a lawyer or a doctor.

Such societal change also causes the generation to adopt a new way of living and thinking. Inter-generational mobility is affected by the differences in the parents’ and their offspring’s upbringing, changes in population, and changes in occupation.

**INTRA-GENERATIONAL MOBILITY**

The intra-generational change in societal position occurs during the lifespan of a single generation. It can also refer to a change in position between siblings. One way is when a person climbs up the corporate ladder in their career. For example, an individual starts their career as a clerk and through their life moves on to a senior position such as a director. One sibling may also achieve a higher position in society than their brother or sister.

**HOW SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AFFECTS SOCIAL MOBILITY POSITIVELY AND NEGATIVELY**

The following are some of the ways social stratification affects social mobility positively and negatively:-

**FINANCIAL POTENTIAL**

When you have social mobility, you give everyone the chance to aspire toward prosperity. This usually involves proper education, hard work and the utilization of individual aptitude on a larger scale. Someone who is born poor is not destined to be stuck in that social class his entire life. He has the opportunity to move up and create even greater opportunities for his own children to further advance in social class.

**SOCIAL CLASSES**

Social mobility can create new social classes. Instead of just rich and poor, you now have middle class, which can further be dissected into upper- and lower-middle classes. However, as more and more people fall into this middle-class distinction, it can lead to a more or less classless society, where most of the people within the society fall into one class.

**EDUCATIONAL DRIVE**

The goal of upward social mobility has made education a prime factor in society. A postsecondary education has become the main goal after graduation from a secondary institution, instead of getting a long-term job after high school. Those who choose not to pursue a postsecondary education are often offered lower-paying jobs, making higher education more attractive.

**JOB OPPORTUNITIES**

Social mobility can have a negative effect on job opportunities in two ways. First, social mobility makes competition for the best jobs fiercer, whether it is because individuals want to move up in social class or because they fear a downward move in social class. Second, more people shun lower-paying jobs, because they want a chance to attain upward mobility.

**SOCIETAL ANOMIE**

When more people in society experience upward social mobility, it can lead to societal anomie: where the standards of conduct or values of a society begin to disappear and new standard and values have not yet developed. People in an anomic society may feel emotional distress and lack a sense of purpose. This can lead to harmful events like suicide or homicide.