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CLASS: 300 LEVEL

MATRIC NO: 17/SMS13/008

SUBJECT : SOC 310

DATE:30/4/2020

PART OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

**QUESTIONS:**

**1. Discuss the Consequences of social stratification in the society.**

2. What is social mobility? Citing relvant examples, discuss how social stratification system can impact social mobility both positively and negatively.

**ANSWERS**

1. Introduction

Broadly defined, social stratification is an important part of many areas of study in sociology, but it also constitutes a distinct field on its own. Simply put, social stratification is the allocation of individuals and groups according to various social hierarchies of differing power, status, or prestige. Although divisions are often based on gender, religion, or race and ethnicity, the present entry focuses largely on socioeconomic inequalities, for the most part leaving other forms of social inequality to other entries.

In modern Western societies, social stratification is typically defined in terms of three [social classes](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_class): (i) the [upper class](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upper_class), (ii) the [middle class](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_class), and (iii) the [lower class](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Working_class); in turn, each class can be subdivided into, e.g. the upper-stratum, the middle-stratum, and the lower stratum.[[4]](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_stratification#cite_note-Saunders1990-4) Moreover, a social stratum can be formed upon the bases of [kinship](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kinship), [clan](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clan), [tribe](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribe), or [caste](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caste), or all four.

The categorization of people by social strata occurs most clearly in complex [state-based](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_(polity)), [polycentric](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polycentric_law), or [feudal](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feudal) societies, the latter being based upon socio-economic relations among classes of [nobility](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobility) and classes of [peasants](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peasant). Historically, whether or not [hunter-gatherer](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hunter-gatherer), [tribal](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribal), and [band](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Band_society) societies can be defined as socially stratified, or if social stratification otherwise began with [agriculture](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agriculture) and large-scale means of [social exchange](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_exchange_theory), remains a debated matter in the [social sciences](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_sciences).[[5]](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_stratification#cite_note-5) Determining the structures of social stratification arises from inequalities of status among persons, therefore, the degree of [social inequality](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_inequality) determines a person's social stratum. Generally, the greater the [social complexity](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_complexity) of a society, the more social stratification exists, by way of [social differentiation](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Differentiation_(sociology)). Broadly defined, social stratification is an important part of many areas of study in sociology, but it also constitutes a distinct field on its own. Simply put, social stratification is the allocation of individuals and groups according to various social hierarchies of differing power, status, or prestige. Although divisions are often based on gender, religion, or race and ethnicity, the present entry focuses largely on socioeconomic inequalities, for the most part leaving other forms of social inequality to other entries. In this regard, social stratification is found in every society, even if it takes on slightly different forms. Uncovering what accounts for differences in social stratification—among societies and within particular societies over time—is a long-standing goal of the field. The classic works of early stratification sociologists—spurred by the work of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim—tended to be concerned with the question of “why” and “how” stratification arose in the first place. Although this debate continues to be an underlying motivation for much research on stratification, empirical research typically tackles questions for which evidence is more tangible. By the 1950s, stratification research was increasingly concerned with social mobility, though mostly within individual countries. By the 1980s, explaining cross-national differences in stratification became an important goal of the field. By now, stratification research is characterized by several debates. Although it has received somewhat less attention in the past decade or so, a classic debate centers on how socioeconomic position should be measured. Emphasis here has been on the applicability of measures of social class, status, and prestige. Although there are certainly important exceptions, differences in approach generally fall along territorial lines. European sociologists have tended to focus on relevance of occupation-based measures of social class, while North American sociologists have tended to rely on measures of socioeconomic status, which incorporate education as well as occupation. There have also been debates regarding the most effective ways to measure class and socioeconomic status. Yet other debates center on the importance of incorporating race and gender in studies of stratification. Finally, in recent decades emphasis has moved to the importance of education, both as a source of stratification on its own, and how it affects economic inequalities.

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SOCIAL stratification is the main reason for relational set of inequalities in economic, social, political and ideological dimensions. It is a system whereby people rank and evaluate each other. On the basis of such evaluation, one is rewarded with more wealth, authority, power and prestige.

It is broadly organised into three parts: upper class, middle class and lower class on the basis of power and wealth. This has resulted in the creation of a number of levels within our society.

Social stratification causes social disparity and many problems as it is an unjust system with monopoly of power and wealth in a particular group. It affects life chances, lifestyles and prestige. It creates emotional stress and depression for the people belonging to lower social stratum as they have unequal access to wealth, power and prestige.

It creates a huge gulf between the people in terms of their incomes and a range of measures associated with social position, education, health, and psychological well-being. It is distinctly perceived that disparity causes chaos in society. These are the stumbling blocks in the way to progress and development of the country.

Noted sociologist and humanistic scholar Pitirim A. Sorokin penned one of the most comprehensive definitions of social stratification. He wrote:

“Social stratification means the differentiation of a given population into hierarchically superposed classes. It is manifested in the existence of upper and lower social layers. Its basis and very essence consist in an unequal distribution of rights and privileges, duties and responsibilities, social values and privations, social power and influences among the members of a society.”

1. Throughout sociology, stratification is a notion amongst the ""category of men and women into organizations according to shared socio-economical problems ... A relational list of inequalities together with economic, cultural, politics in addition to ideologic size."" Any time distinctions lead to greater reputation, electricity or perhaps benefit for a lot of communities above the different it's known as Social Stratification. This can be a method where club rates high groups of individuals inside a structure Stratification is founded on a number of basics: Stratification is a trait involving community, not only a reflection regarding individual dissimilarities; Stratification has around via down the family; Social stratification is definitely general nevertheless varied; Social stratification involves not just inequality however beliefs also.

Social mobility is the movement in time of individuals, families, or other social units between positions of varying advantage in the system of [social stratification](https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/social-stratification) of a society. Classical authors have studied social mobility primarily in its contribution to class or status group formation. Recent research concentrates on identifying the degree to which individuals' social opportunities in life are conditioned by their social origins (conditions of life in the parental family) and on specifying the individual, institutional, and societal factors responsible for it. Studies of the process of status attainment show that the [social status or prestige](https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/social-prestige) level of a job attained by a person at a given point in his or her career strongly depends on earlier job achievements, educational qualifications, and parents' status. Studies of intergenerational class mobility analyze the patterns of transition from parental (origin) class to individuals' own (destination) class and show that class destinations heavily depend on class origins. While, in general, a high degree of constancy over time and cross-national similarity among economically advanced societies is found in relative rates of mobility, social fluidity has slightly increased in some societies in recent decades. Absolute rates of mobility vary more than relative rates across societies and time, yet have partly converged between societies in recent decades.

How Can Social Stratification Be Affected Positively?

History is replete with stories of people changing the stratification of their society for the better. Civil, human, labor and voting rights movements are all examples of citizens working toward the systematic dismantling of negative aspects of social stratification.

Through policy and regulation, legislative bodies have the power to redistribute wealth, social benefits, and opportunities for social mobility, offsetting the inequalities inherent to social stratification. And many progressive policy advocates and organizations around the world have outlined legislation shown to be effective toward this end.

But in political systems like that of the U.S., with privately funded election campaigns, interest groups and lobbying groups, wealthy individuals and corporations can hold an immense amount of influence in legislative governance. Again, wealth, power and prestige are intricately interconnected, reinforcing the cyclical nature of social stratification.

Clearly, the subject of social stratification is immensely complicated. And the phenomenon is at the root of many social issues worldwide. But it is also a fascinating and extremely important area of study for the engaged student of sociology. Sociologists can gain many insights from the careful scrutiny of social stratification in its many forms. And these insights can be used to form progressive strategies and guidelines for policy making and regulation aimed at addressing the worst of today’s current social inequalities.

How Can Social Stratification be Affected Negatively?

■ Ethnic and cultural problems: Social mobility can have a negative impact on the demography of a territory. It can create a state of collision between the interests of different groups, which, in turn, can create problems of social disorder. The constant standoff between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria is one example.

■ Increases in crime: Social mobility can increase the crime rate. Because of social mobility a taste for lavish lifestyles has been encouraged in people as they forgo hard work for get-rich-quick schemes. In addition, in the absence of the head of the family, children can become delinquent which also leads to increased crime.

■ Unemployment: Social mobility can increase unemployment. In every society, some professions are highly valued. Consequently, people move to those professions in great numbers. As a result of this, they disregard or devalue other older professions which people may no longer want to fill.

■ Unequal division of population: Social mobility can bring about the unequal distribution of population in industrial areas and cities.

**CONCLUSION**

Sorokin wrote: “Social stratification means the differentiation of a given population into hierarchically superposed classes. It is manifested in the existence of upper and lower social layers. Its basis and very essence consist in an unequal distribution of rights and privileges, duties and responsibilities, social values and privations, social power and influences among the members of a society.”

Sorokin's definition focuses on the unequal distribution of allaspects of rewards or rights in a society, not just the financial ones. "Rewards" can also come in the form of prestige (widespread, consensual respect and reputation), opportunity for social mobility, inherited social standing and connections, and other forms of privilege and power.

Privations can be inherited too, whether financially in the form of family debt or socially through various systems of oppression and discrimination. Race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, education level, born economic class -- all of these differentiations (and many more) can affect a person's "lot in life" before they are even born.

In the U.S., statistics clearly show astonishing inequalities between socioeconomic classes as well as between dominant and minority subgroups in the distribution of wealth, income, health and social benefits, and other such measurable data. But there are many more dimensions to systemic stratification. And they are all interconnected, affecting one another in complex ways. This is the concept of intersectionality, an essential part of how sociology analyzes social stratification.

For instance, level of education and occupational prestige are much of what defines socioeconomic class. U.S. public schools in poor rural or inner-city areas generally have fewer resources than schools in wealthy areas, often resulting in a lower quality education. Higher education is prohibitively expensive for the poor. Therefore, the lower class has very little access to quality higher education. Good jobs usually require highly educated employees. Thus, the intersectionality of socioeconomic class, education and occupation in the U.S. effectively limits the lower class's ability to land better jobs and break the cycle of poverty.

This is ironic, as the (intentioned) point of a capitalistic class system (like the one in the U.S.) is a form of meritocracy. An individual in an ideal meritocracy achieves their hierarchical rank in society through merit and vertical social mobility. Their wealth, social power and prestige is earned and derived from what they do and how well they do it as opposed to who they are or where they come from.

This principle of merit-based vertical social mobility and opportunity is part of the American dream. And it has worked for some -- the classic rags to riches story. But, in reality, the American class system is much messier, and it is hampered by staggering inequalities. The intersectionality of poverty, access to education, discrimination, and the power and influence of the rich has created a cyclic form of stratification in the U.S., concentrating wealth, power and prestige at the top.