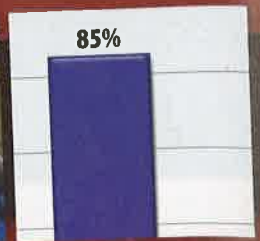


# networks

There's More Online!

- ✓ **CARTOON** Different Perspectives
- ✓ **CARTOON** Low Status
- ✓ **CHART** Prestige Rankings of Selected Occupations
- ✓ **GRAPHS** Measures of Stratification
- ✓ **SELF-CHECK QUIZ**



## Reading HELPDESK



### Academic Vocabulary

- exploit
- income

### Content Vocabulary

- **social stratification**
- **social class**
- **bourgeoisie**
- **proletariat**
- **wealth**
- **power**
- **prestige**
- **false consciousness**

### TAKING NOTES:

#### Key Ideas and Details

**ORGANIZING** As you read about social stratification, use a graphic organizer like the one below to compare the three dimensions of stratification.



## LESSON 1

# Dimensions and Explanations of Stratification

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS** • What is "equality"? • To what extent are societies unequal?

## IT MATTERS BECAUSE

Society is divided into classes that have unequal levels of income, wealth, power, and prestige.

## Social Stratification and Social Class

**GUIDING QUESTION** How is social stratification related to social class?

In one of his children's books, Dr. Seuss writes of the Sneetches, birds whose social status depends on whether they have a large star on their stomachs. Star-bellied Sneetches have high status, and plain-bellied Sneetches have low status. In *Animal Farm*, George Orwell creates a barnyard society where the pigs ultimately take over the previously classless animal society. The animals' motto changes from "All animals are equal" to "All animals are equal—but some animals are more equal than others." Both books mock the tendency of humans to arrange themselves by social class and how the people of each class do not enjoy the same privileges.

Sociologists call this social arrangement **social stratification**. It is the creation of layers (or strata) of people who possess unequal shares of scarce resources, particularly income, wealth, power, and prestige.

Each layer in a stratification system is a **social class**. Members of a social class have similar amounts of scarce resources. They share a lifestyle with common values, norms, and social status. The number of social classes in a society varies. Technologically developed countries generally have three broad classes—upper, middle, and lower—subdivided into smaller categories. In some less developed countries, there might be only an upper class and a lower class.

Two pioneers of sociology, Karl Marx and Max Weber, made the most significant early contributions to the study of social stratification. Marx explained the importance of the economic foundations of social classes, while Weber emphasized the prestige and power aspects.

### ✓ READING PROGRESS CHECK

**Describing** What are the elements of a social class?

**AN OUTSIDER'S VIEW OF AMERICAN SOCIETY**

When French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville traveled to the United States in 1831, he was fascinated to see American democracy at work. More than three decades after both the American and French revolutions ended, de Tocqueville was eager to learn from America's democratic example and experience and to share the phenomenon with the French people. In this excerpt from his work *Democracy in America*, de Tocqueville comments on equality and class at a time when America's agrarian society was shifting toward industrialization.

**PRIMARY SOURCE**

"I am aware that among a great democratic people there will always be some members of the community in great poverty, and others in great opulence: but the poor, instead of forming the immense majority of the nation, as is always the case in aristocratic communities, are comparatively few in number, and the laws do not bind them together by the ties of irremediable and hereditary penury.

The wealthy, on their side, are scarce and powerless; they have no privileges which attract public observation; even their wealth, as it is no longer incorporated and bound up with the soil, is impalpable, and as it were invisible. As there is no longer a race of poor men, so there is no longer a race of rich men; the latter spring up daily from the multitude, and relapse into it again. Hence they do not form a distinct class, which may be easily marked out and plundered; and, moreover, as they are connected with the mass of their fellow-citizens by a thousand secret ties, the people cannot assail them without inflicting an injury upon itself.

Between these two extremes of democratic communities stand an innumerable multitude of men almost alike, who, without being exactly either rich or poor, are possessed of sufficient property to desire the maintenance of order, yet not enough to excite envy. . . .

If we attentively consider each of the classes of which society is composed, it is easy to see that the passions engendered by property are keenest and most tenacious among the middle classes. The poor often care but little for what they possess, because they suffer much more from the want of what they have not, than they enjoy the little they have. The rich have many other passions besides that of riches to satisfy; and, besides, the long and arduous enjoyment of a great fortune sometimes makes them in the end insensible to its charms. But the men who have a competency, alike removed from opulence and from penury, attach an enormous value to their possessions. As they are still almost within the reach of poverty, they see its



Alexis de Tocqueville originally came to America to study the U.S. penal system but was more captivated by Americans themselves.

privations near at hand, and dread them; between poverty and themselves there is nothing but a scanty fortune, upon which they immediately fix their apprehensions and their hopes. Every day increases the interest they take in it, by the constant cares which it occasions; and they are more attached to it by their continual exertions to increase the amount. The notion of surrendering the smallest part of it is insupportable to them, and they consider its total loss as the worst of misfortunes.

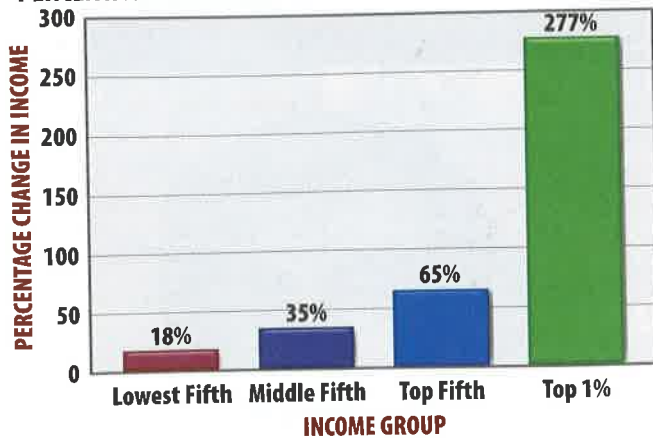
Now these eager and apprehensive men of small property constitute the class which is constantly increased by the equality of conditions. Hence, in democratic communities, the majority of the people do not clearly see what they have to gain by a revolution, but they continually and in a thousand ways feel that they might lose by one."

—from *Democracy in America*, 1847

**DBQ** ▶ **CRITICAL THINKING**

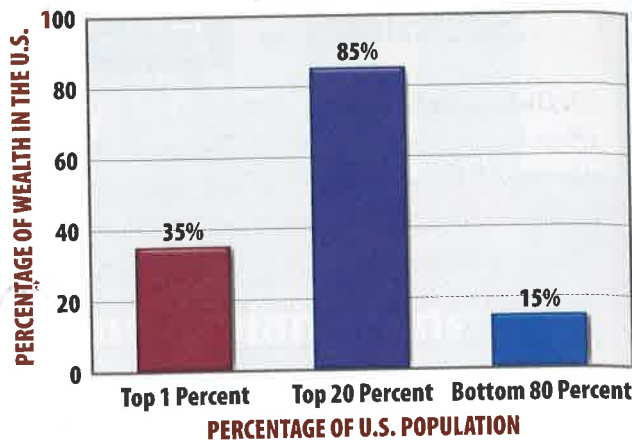
- 1. Making Connections** How does the excerpt above illustrate the importance of historical perspective in interpreting the social world?
- 2. Evaluating** How accurate was de Tocqueville's interpretation of America's social structure in the 1830s? Explain.

PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN AFTER-TAX INCOME, 1979 TO 2007



Source: Congressional Budget Office, October 2011

SHARES OF WEALTH



Source: Edward N. Wolff, "Recent Trends in Household Wealth in the United States: Rising Debt and the Middle Class Squeeze—an Update to 2007," Working Paper No. 589, The Levy Economics Institute, March 2010.

GRAPHS

MEASURES OF STRATIFICATION

The chart on the left shows income growth figures for four groups from the lowest-earning fifth of the population (1–20 percent) to the top 1 percent of earners. The chart on the right compares the share of national wealth owned by different segments of the population. In an unstratified society, the share of wealth would be proportionate to the group's share of the overall population.

CRITICAL THINKING

- Drawing Conclusions** What generalizations can you make from the chart on the left about income growth in the United States in these years?
- Making Inferences** What does the chart on the right illustrate about social class and social stratification in the United States?

**social stratification** the ranking of people or groups according to their unequal access to scarce resources

**social class** a segment of society whose members have similar economic circumstances, norms, and status

**bourgeoisie** the class that owns the means of production

The Economic Dimension

**GUIDING QUESTION** How is the distribution of economic resources related to social class?

Marx identified several social classes in nineteenth-century industrial society. These included laborers, servants, factory workers, craftspeople, proprietors of small businesses, and moneyed capitalists. He predicted, however, that capitalist societies would ultimately be reduced to two social classes. He thought that those who owned the means of production would be the rulers. He called this class the **bourgeoisie**. Those who worked for wages—the **proletariat**—would be the ruled.

Marx further predicted that because the capitalists owned the means of production (factories, land, and so forth), they would both rule and **exploit**, or take advantage of, the working class. The working class would have nothing to sell but its labor. Marx believed that control of the economy gave the capitalists control over the legal, educational, and governmental systems as well. For Karl Marx, the economy determined the nature of society.

Income Versus Wealth

In his writings, Marx emphasized the unequal distribution of economic resources. How unequally are these resources distributed in the United States? When discussing this issue, economists often make a distinction between income and wealth. **Income** is the amount of money received within a given time period by an individual or group. **Wealth** refers to all the economic resources possessed by an individual or group. In brief, your income is your paycheck and your wealth is what you own.

Extremes of Income and Wealth in the United States

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, approximately 46.2 million Americans are living in poverty. (The federal government defines poverty as a family of four living on less than \$22,314.) This is the largest number of people living in poverty since the government began publishing poverty statistics in 1959. At the other extreme, 3.1 million Americans are millionaires and around 400 are billionaires.

In 2010, the richest 20 percent of American households received over 50 percent of the nation's income. The poorest 20 percent received less than 3.5 percent. People with higher incomes found their incomes growing at a faster rate than people with lower incomes. The graph at the left shows the percentage changes

in after-tax income in the United States over a 28-year period. After-tax income is annual income minus federal income taxes. During this time, the income of the top 1 percent of the population increased by 277 percent. Compare this to an 18 percent increase for the lowest fifth of the population.

Income distribution figures reveal economic inequality, but they do not show the full extent of inequality. For that, inequality in wealth must be considered. In the United States, wealth is concentrated in the hands of a small number of people. The top 1 percent alone has nearly 35 percent of the total wealth in the United States. The next 9 percent own 39 percent of the wealth. That leaves only about 27 percent of wealth for everyone else—90 percent of the population.

### READING PROGRESS CHECK

**Analyzing** How would you describe the distribution of wealth in the United States?

## The Power Dimension

**GUIDING QUESTION** How can power be exercised without wealth?

**Power** is the ability to control the behavior of others, even against their will. Individuals or groups who possess power can use it to enhance their own interests, often at the expense of others.

According to Marx, those who own and control capital, or the means of production, have the power in a society. Weber argued that while wealth certainly helps, economic success and power are not the same. Money and ownership of the means of production are not the only resources that can be used as a basis for power. Expert knowledge can be a source of power, too. People can use their superior knowledge and skills to influence those around them. For example, lawmakers may place a high value on the expertise of certain professionals, such as scientists or economists. Experts can also use their superior knowledge to gain positions of power within an organization.

Power is also attached to the social positions we hold. For instance, elected officers in organizations have more power than rank-and-file members.

**proletariat** the class that labors without owning the means of production

**exploit** to take unfair advantage of

**income** amount of money received by an individual or group over a specific time period

**wealth** total economic resources held by a person or group

**power** the ability to control the behavior of others, even against their will

### CARTOON

#### DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

Status is a social construct, dependent on how a person is perceived.

#### CRITICAL THINKING

**1. Analyzing Visuals** What “complexities” is the man in the second frame ingesting?

**2. Drawing Inferences** What does the cartoon suggest about the way people see the actions of high-status individuals?



OCCUPATIONS	PRESTIGE SCORE	OCCUPATIONS	PRESTIGE SCORE	OCCUPATIONS	PRESTIGE SCORE
Surgeon	87	Police officer	61	Automobile dealer	43
Astronaut	80	Actor	60	Deep-sea diver	43
Lawyer	75	Journalist	60	Landlord	41
College professor	74	TV anchorman	60	Prison guard	40
Airline pilot	73	Businessperson	60	Auto mechanic	40
Dentist	72	Actress	59	Roofer	37
Priest	71	Nursery school teacher	55	Barber	36
Engineer	71	Fashion designer	55	Sales clerk in a store	36
TV anchorwoman	70	Firefighter	53	Bus driver	32
Secret Service agent	70	Airplane mechanic	53	Dry cleaner	32
School principal	69	Commercial artist	52	Waitress	29
Medical technician	68	Housewife	51	Taxicab driver	28
Optometrist	67	Funeral director	49	Used car salesperson	25
Registered nurse	66	Jazz musician	48	Bill collector	24
High school teacher	66	Mail carrier	47	Janitor	22
Air traffic controller	65	Insurance agent	46	Grocery bagger	18
Professional athlete	65	Mechanic	46	Street-corner drug dealer	13
Paramedic	64	Disc jockey	45	Fortune teller	13
Public grade school teacher	64	Photographer	45	Panhandler	11
Advertising executive	63	Plumber	45		
Veterinarian	62	Bank teller	43		

Source: General Social Survey, National Opinion Research Center, 1996

## CHART ^

### PRESTIGE RANKINGS OF SELECTED OCCUPATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

#### ▶ CRITICAL THINKING

- Analyzing** Which job listed holds the greatest prestige? The least? How would you explain the difference?
- Making Inferences** According to these responses, on what is occupational prestige based?

**prestige** recognition, respect, and admiration attached to social positions

People in top executive positions in the mass media are powerful even if they themselves do not have great wealth. They have this power because they can use their positions to influence people's opinions.

Individuals can wield great power without wealth if they have large numbers of people on their side or if they skillfully organize resources. Indian nationalist Mahatma Gandhi, for example, was able to bring about the end of centuries of British rule in India. He roused the support of millions of Indians to peacefully resist British colonial policies.

#### ✓ READING PROGRESS CHECK

**Applying** What role does knowledge play in power?

## The Prestige Dimension

**GUIDING QUESTION** How is prestige awarded?

People who are wealthy and powerful are often regarded as having characteristics they may not actually possess. Not all of these people are as intelligent and wise as is usually assumed. Still, these attributed characteristics help them gain **prestige**—recognition, respect, and admiration attached to social positions. Prestige is the third dimension of social stratification. It is defined by your culture and society. A Mafia leader, for example, may have the admiration and respect of the members of his criminal organization, but outside of their own circles, Mafia dons are usually held in low regard.

Prestige is given by others, not claimed by oneself. Scientists cannot proclaim themselves Nobel Prize winners, journalists cannot award themselves Pulitzer

Prizes, and corporate executives cannot grant themselves honorary doctorates. Recognition must come from others; it is socially constructed.

Because Americans place a high value on the acquisition of wealth and power, they tend to assign higher prestige to the wealthy and powerful. As the Mafia don example shows, however, wealth and power alone may not give high status. Other values also come into play. You may even enjoy high status without wealth or power. For example, nurses and priests have more prestige than actors and business executives. In America, prestige is often related to a person's occupation.

### READING PROGRESS CHECK

**Identifying** What factors besides wealth are related to prestige?

## Theories of Stratification

**GUIDING QUESTION** How do functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism explain stratification?

Why are societies stratified? Sociology's three major perspectives—functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism—offer different explanations.

### Functionalist Theory of Stratification

Functionalists look at stratification and see an ordered and stable society. They believe that every element of society serves a function that benefits the whole. According to the functionalists, stratification ensures that the most qualified people fill the most important positions, perform their tasks competently, and are rewarded for their efforts.

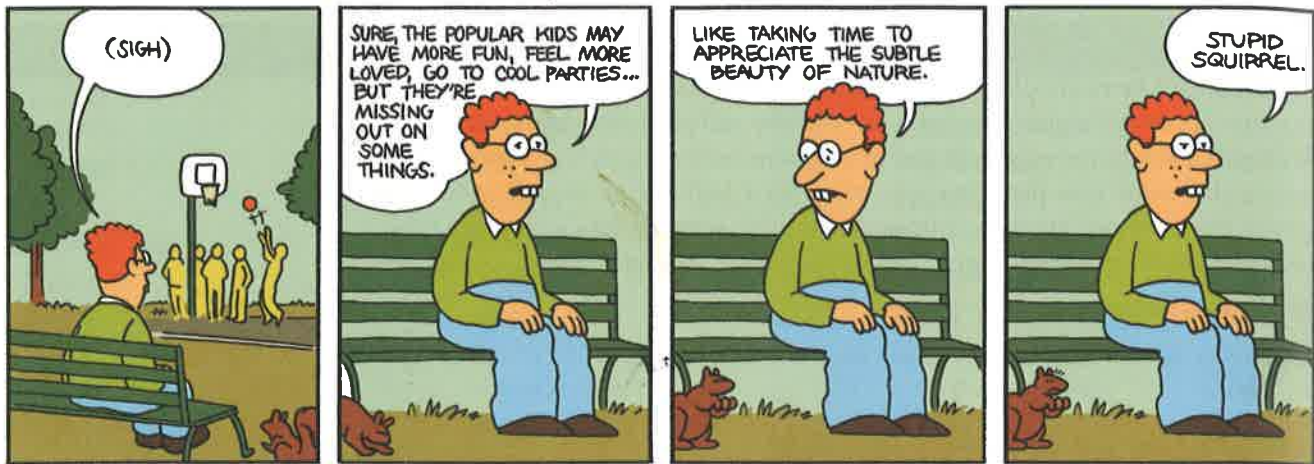
The functionalist theory holds that inequality exists because certain jobs are more important than others and that these jobs often require special talent and training. It is necessary to encourage people to make the sacrifices necessary to fill these jobs.

Each social class can be described in terms of its access to scarce resources and the shared lifestyle of its members.

### CRITICAL THINKING

**Applying** How would functionalists explain the different classes these people occupy in society? Do you agree?





## CARTOON

### LOW STATUS

Lack of status can lead to painful isolation.

#### ► CRITICAL THINKING

- Analyzing Visuals** How does the speaker try to console himself, and how effective is that effort? Why?
- Making Connections** Does the cartoon support Marx's or Weber's view of power? Why?

### false consciousness

according to Karl Marx, working-class acceptance of capitalist ideas and values

Society attaches special monetary rewards and prestige to positions that require advanced, specialized education. That is why doctors make more money and have more prestige than bus drivers. A higher level of skill is required in the medical profession, and our society's need for highly qualified doctors is great.

According to functionalist theory, society remains stable because everyone accepts the social order. Social institutions, such as family, religion, education, and government, help ensure that everyone adheres to the same norms and values.

Functionalism has been criticized because it seems to accept and even justify inequality. It also leaves no room to explain social change or social conflict. In addition, its view of different earnings for different professions cannot explain some features of the national income structure. Why do professional athletes or entertainers make far more money than physicians? Those individuals have special talents, but does society need entertainment more than it needs health care?

### Conflict Theory of Stratification

For conflict theorists, stratification occurs as a result of the struggle for scarce resources. According to conflict theory, inequality exists because some people are willing to exploit others. Stratification, from this perspective, is based on force rather than agreement.

The conflict theory of stratification is based on Marx's ideas regarding class conflict. For Marx, all of history has been a class struggle between the powerful and the powerless, those who exploit and those who are exploited. Capitalist society is the final stage of the class struggle.

Although the capitalists are outnumbered, they are able to control the workers. This is because the capitalists have the power to promote a belief system that legitimizes the way things are. Those who own the means of production are able to spread their ideas, beliefs, and values through the schools, media, churches, and government. For example, the powerful spread the idea that income and wealth are based on ability, hard work, and individual effort. Marx used the term **false consciousness** to refer to working-class acceptance of capitalist ideas and values.

Later conflict sociologists proposed that stratification is based more on power than on property ownership. The United States's legal system, for example, is used by the wealthy for their benefit, and the political system is skewed toward the interests of the powerful.

### Symbolic Interactionism and Stratification

Symbolic interactionism helps us understand how people are socialized to accept the existing stratification structure. According to this perspective, American children are taught that a person's social class is the result of talent and effort.

# Theoretical Perspectives

## SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

This table summarizes approaches of the major theoretical perspectives to issues of social stratification and makes predictions based on each perspective. The research topic could be analyzed from any of the three perspectives to produce different expected results.

Theoretical Perspective	Research Topic	Expected Result
Functionalism	Relationship between job performance and pay	Pay levels increase with job performance.
Conflict Theory	Relationship between social class and the likelihood of punishment for a crime	The chances for prosecution decrease as the level of social class increases.
Symbolic Interactionism	Link between social class and self-esteem	Self-esteem is higher among the upper class than the lower class.

### CRITICAL THINKING

**1. Identifying Central Ideas** Why would functionalists examine workers and how their job performance affects their pay?

**2. Contrasting** How are the three expected results different?

According to this view, those “on top” have worked hard and used their abilities, whereas those “on the bottom” lack the talent or the motivation to succeed. Hence, it is not fair to challenge the system. By being socialized in this way, people come to accept the existing system.

Symbolic interactionism’s view of stratification says that social class has an impact on an individual’s self-esteem, or feeling of personal worth. In the symbolic interactionist view, self-esteem is based on how we think others see us. Understandably, people in the lower social classes or social strata tend to suffer from lower self-esteem. How could it be otherwise when messages from all sides tell them they are inferior? Those at the top blame the people at the bottom for their low status; the people at the bottom blame themselves. The reverse is true for the higher classes. Those profiting most from the stratification structure tend to have higher self-esteem. This fuels their conviction that the present arrangement is just. In short, people’s self-concepts also help preserve the status quo.

### READING PROGRESS CHECK

**Applying** Which theory is most likely to be supported by the upper classes? Why?

## LESSON 1 REVIEW



### Reviewing Vocabulary

- 1. Explaining** What is *social stratification*?
- 2. Describing** What is the difference between *income* and *wealth*?

### Using Your Notes

- 3. Summarizing** Use your notes to write a statement summarizing the three dimensions of social stratification.

### Answering the Guiding Questions

- 4. Explaining** How is social stratification related to social class?

**5. Finding the Main Idea** How is the distribution of economic resources related to social class?

**6. Analyzing** How can power be exercised without wealth?

**7. Specifying** How is prestige awarded?

**8. Comparing and Contrasting** How do functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism explain stratification?

### Writing Activity

**9. Narrative** Describe evidence of social stratification you see in the world around you. Identify examples of the three dimensions of social stratification.