

Social Stratification



What is **Social Stratification**?

Definition: *hierarchical* arrangement of people within *a society*



Strata

Definition: the *levels* people are placed within the *hierarchy* of *stratification* based on various *dimensions*

Think:
“Layers”



Dimensions

Power: ability to control the behavior of others (attached to the social positions we hold)



Prestige: level of respect/admiration in which one is regarded by others (based on social position & voluntarily given)



Income: amount of money received within a given period of time by an individual or group

Wealth: all economic resources possessed by an individual (everything you own)



Additional Dimensions

Education

Ethnicity

Race

Religion

Occupation

Family

Theoretical Explanations of Stratification

Conflict Theory:

- ◆ Inequality exists due to willingness of other to exploit people
- ◆ Inequality impedes progress
- ◆ Those whom have power keep others powerless to keep status quo
- ◆ Positions in society exist only as those in power deem them important



Social Inequality

Definition: individuals in a society that ***do not*** have ***equal social status***



Examples of Social Inequality:

- **Economic**: inequality based on distribution of wealth and income
- **Gender**: obvious or hidden inequality of power/reward based on gender
- **Racial**: unequal treatment based on physical characteristics

Symbolic Interactionist Theory:

- ◆ Social classes are based on hard work, talent, motivation
- ◆ People accept those ideas as true to keep status quo

Functionalist Theory:

- ◆ Assures most qualified fill most important jobs
- ◆ Attach rewards (wealth, power, income, prestige) to those who attain position
- ◆ Positions in society are ranked in order of importance
- ◆ Inequality is inevitable and desirable

Class Consciousness

Definition: the awareness of belonging to ones social class, social position or socioeconomic status within a given society

