Chapt. 8: Social Class

What do we mean by "social class"?

What is Social Class?

- Social class—a large group of people who rank closely to one another in wealth, power, and prestige (what about status inconsistency?).
- Social class provides people with different chances, and different ways of viewing the world (Do you agree?)

Components of Social Class:

1. WEALTH
   Can someone be wealthy but have a small income?
   Wealth consists of property as well as income (a land owner can be wealthy but have little income).

2. POWER —the ability to carry out your will despite resistance.
   Is power in the hands of the few or the many? (consider Mills “Power Elite”)

3. PRESTIGE —respect or regard.
   - What contributes to prestige: power, wealth
   - What are characteristics of a prestigious job? pay, education, abstract thought, autonomy
Do you think most people in the U.S. are conscious of social class?

How many social classes are there?

What Causes One to be in a Particular Social Class?

Ascribed status (socialization?)
- it is involuntary, did not ask for it

Achieved status (socialization?)
- have asked for it, earned, accomplished

Causes of Poverty

Is the cause of poverty an individual/personal one or a societal/structural one?

List examples of each.

What Causes One to be in a Lower Social Class?

Structural causes:
- lack of education,
- lack of transportation,
- lack of good jobs,
- socialization,
- ascribed status—born into it
- institutional discrimination

Some of the poor get trapped in a culture of poverty

That is, the values and behaviors of the poor that make them different from other people.
What Causes One to be in a Lower Social Class?

Personal causes:
• can't keep appointments,
• all-night partying,
• frivolous spending,
• alcohol/drug abuse,
• out of wedlock births
• characteristics of indivs.

Is the cause of poverty an individual/personal one or a societal/structural one? List examples of each.

What are the consequences of being in a particular social class? For example, how do those in upper classes differ from those in lower classes (e.g., health, opportunities)

Consequences of Social Class?
• Health: The lower the income, the more apt people are to be sick. (Why?)
• Mental health: is worse for the lower class than that of the upper class. (Why?)
• Amount of control of one's life

Consequences of Social Class?
• Social class influences whether a person, discharged from the hospital, will be readmitted to the hospital for the same problem within 30 days.

What factors might influence whether a person gets readmitted within 30 days rather than being able to recuperate without being readmitted?
Characteristics of the Poor:

- Region of U.S.: South
- Race: White
- Level of Education: Less than H.S.
- Sex/Age: Female, children

Poverty

- The poverty line—calculating the official measure of poverty.
  - The measure assumes people spend about 1/3 of their income on food.
  - The government figures out a low cost food budget and multiplies it by 3.
  - Those above the line are considered non-poor, those below the line are considered poor. (What about people who are one dollar above the calculated figure for being in poverty?)

Government and Poverty

Programs for the poor
- Medicaid (health)
- Welfare (temporary income)
- Housing (certificates)
- Food stamps

Affirmative Action Programs
for hiring, promotion, and college admission to veterans and minorities:

What are the pluses and minuses of such programs?

The End

“What is Social Class?”

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