

Chapt. 8:

Social Class

What do we mean by "social class"?

What Causes One to be in a Particular Social Class?

Ascribed status (born into it)
-it is involuntary, did not ask for it

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

What is Social Class?

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

Causes of Poverty

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

List examples of each.

Do you think most people in the U.S. are conscious of social class?

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

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What Causes One to be in a Lower Social Class?

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.

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Consequences of Social Class?

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

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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.

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Characteristics of the Poor:

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

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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)

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Poverty

- The poverty line—the official measure of poverty.
 - Poor 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.

Government and Poverty

Programs for the poor

- Medicaid (health)
- Welfare (temporary income)
- Housing (certificates)
- Food stamps

Components of Social Class:

- The top 20% of the population receives almost half of all income in the United States.
- The bottom 20% receives only 4.2% of income.
- There is growing inequality.

Government and Poverty

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

What are the pluses and minuses of such programs?

2. **POWER** —the ability to carry out your will despite resistance.

Is power in the hands of the few or the many?

Components of Social Class:

(wealth, power, prestige)

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).

3. **PRESTIGE** —respect or regard.

- What contributes to prestige: power, wealth
- What are characteristics of a prestigious job?
pay, education, abstract thought, autonomy