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?)

What caused social classes to emerge in the U.S.?

Karl Marx explained that it is economics that has caused the class system

Marx believed that economics created two groups:

• bourgeoisie (owners of means of production)

• proletariat (workers)

Marx predicted:

• the rich would get richer

• the workers would develop a class consciousness and become aware of the rich taking advantage of them.

• revolution would ensue and communism would eventually replace capitalism

Marx proclaimed:

“The proletarians of the world have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to gain. Workers of the world, unite!”
Karl Marx's view of capitalism:

"Catch a man a fish, and you can sell it to him. Teach a man to fish, and you ruin a wonderful business opportunity."

Karl Marx's view of communism:

"From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs."

What do you see as the strengths of:

communism?
Capitalism?

What are their weaknesses?

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
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.

Personal causes:

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

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?

• Family Life
  Choice of husband or wife
  divorce
  child rearing
• Education
• Politics
• Religion

• 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.

**Government and Poverty**

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

**Welfare Benefits for the Poor**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Household Members</th>
<th>Maximum Amount of Gross Income** for All Household Members</th>
<th>Maximum Food Stamp Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$1,307</td>
<td>$192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>$1,769</td>
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<td>$504</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>$2,665</td>
<td>$640</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

One can receive welfare benefits up to 5 years but it varies by state to some extent.

**Poverty and Use of Tobacco**

- Low-income persons are more likely to experience health problems from smoking
- Low-income persons are just as likely to try quitting as higher income persons but are less successful
- Low-income persons smoke twice as long before quitting as higher income persons

**Affirmative Action Programs**

for hiring, promotion, and college admission to veterans and minorities:

What are the pluses and minuses of such programs?