

Social Stratification

- What is social stratification?
 - Systematic inequality between groups of people
- Why social?
 - SS concerns the groups of people
 - Systems of inequality are organized around groups with a shared characteristic.
- Criteria delimit the inequality
 - wealth, income, prestige, power, gender, education, age
- Rankings of groups change only very slowly
- Contemporary European societies are stratified societies

Three basic models of social stratification

- Slavery—ownership of certain people
- Caste—status for life
- Class—positions based on economics

On what dimensions does stratification exist?

- Assets, wealth, money (rich vs. poor people) = economic view
- Occupations (labour market positions) = social class view
- Prestige, respect = social status view
- Power, influence, authority = power view

- Income, occupation, education, power = socioeconomic status view

- The debate is over which is the most important or most basic criteria

- Three main dimensions of stratification are: **economic capital (income, salary), education (prestige, respect), power (authority)**

Social stratification cube

- Three main dimensions
 - *economic capital (income, salary)*
 - *education (prestige, respect)*
 - *power (authority)*
- Fourth dimension
 - *time*
- Social mobility vs. social reproduction
- Delimitation of social strata (no social classes)

Consequences of SSC

- Reproduction of social strata
 - In European countries children from the highest social classes have about 80% higher probability to attend university compare to children from the working class.
 - Children from highest social class have 70% probability to get married with the same social class partner
 - Correlation between parents' education and children education is about 0.44
 - Correlation between parents' income and income of children is about 0.35.
 - Marriage homogamy is about 55 %
 - Structured by social class position
 - marriage preferences vs. marriage remainders

Two reasons of reproduction

- Social reproduction
 - glass ceiling
 - social barriers
 - system
 - everyone wants the same
- Cultural reproduction
 - sticky floor
 - cultural values, attitudes
 - behaviour
 - people want different things

Two concepts of social stratification

- *Inequality of conditions*
 - unequal distribution of income to people
 - differences in wealth and material conditions
 - different incomes means different chances to get different goods
- *Inequality of opportunity*
 - unequal start positions
 - different start positions means different chances to get different levels of education, jobs and incomes

Inequality of conditions vs. inequality of opportunity

- *Video YT:* The problem of education inequality | CNBC Reports
- <https://youtu.be/T-JVpKku5SI>



Basic principles social class reproduction

- Cumulative advantage
 - Matthew effect
 - Advantages have tendency to strengthen itself
 - The same can be applied to disadvantages.
- Compensatory advantage
 - Economic, cultural, social, family resources to face risks along the life course

Inequality of material conditions

- indicated by **Lorenz curve** in empirical reality
 - curve not number, it shows the shape of material inequality not the size
- the size of material inequality is indicated by **GINI coefficient**
 - it is number, it shows the size of material inequality

Inequality of opportunity

- indicated by social mobility
 - SM is the movement of people up or down the stratification system
- trends in European countries
 - from agriculture to industry: industrial societies
 - from industry to services: post-industrial societies
 - these trends are reflected in structural social mobility trends
- but no changes in social fluidity (relative social mobility)
 - odds ratios are the same

Justifying Inequality

One justification for inequality is that wide differences in pay are needed to recruit talented people into important jobs, such as specialized surgeons, and to motivate lengthy training.

But how large should these differences be to achieve motivation?

Is inequality ever beneficial to a society?
Why? Why not?

Ascription versus Achievement

- What is *ascription*?
 - How does ascriptive society work?
- What is *achievement*?
 - How does meritocratic society work?
- Why we should strive for *meritocratic societies*?
 - Discussion

Standards of Equality – what should be the goal?

- **Ontological equality** - everyone is created equal. Goal is equal respect and status within the culture.
- **Equality of Condition** – “level playing field,” same starting point for everyone. Goals may include increasing diversity & using affirmative action.
- **Equality of Opportunity** - inequality of condition is acceptable as long as everyone has the same opportunities for advancement and is judged by the same standards
 - Fits most closely with modern capitalist society