

CHAPTER

# 8

# STRATIFICATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND WORLDWIDE

**ASIEN - WOCHEN**

**J  
A  
M**



**J  
A  
M**

**BEI McDONALD'S**

## Understanding Stratification

- Systems of Stratification
- Perspectives on Stratification
- Is Stratification Universal?

## Stratification by Social Class

- Measuring Social Class
- Consequences of Social Class

## Social Mobility

- Open versus Closed Class Systems
- Types of Social Mobility
- Social Mobility in the United States

## Stratification in the World System

- Colonialism, Neocolonialism, and World Systems Analysis
- Multinational Corporations
- Modernization

## Stratification within Nations: A Comparative Perspective

## Social Policy and Stratification: Rethinking Welfare in North America and Europe

- The Issue
- The Setting
- Sociological Insights
- Policy Initiatives

## Boxes

**SOCIOLOGY IN THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY:** Inequality in Japan

**RESEARCH IN ACTION:** When Work Disappears

**EYE ON THE MEDIA:** Social Class in the Movie *Titanic* and on the *SS Titanic*

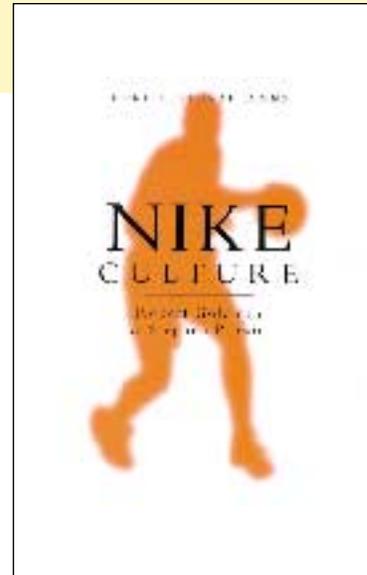
**This** poster advertising “Asian Week” at McDonald’s in Germany attests to the global reach of multinational corporations today. But while the world is shrinking through aspects of globalization like this, there is still a huge gap between rich and poor nations and between rich and poor citizens within nations.

Instantly recognized throughout the world, the *Nike swoosh* sometimes seems to be everywhere—on shirts and caps and pants. The icon is no longer confined to shoes as sponsorship deals have plastered the *swoosh* across jerseys and sporting arenas of all manner, from basketball to football to volleyball to track to soccer to tennis to hockey. *Nike's* growth strategy is based on penetrating new markets in apparel while making acquisitions in sporting goods. The value of the *swoosh* now runs so deep that visitors to remote, rural, and impoverished regions of the Third World report finding peasants sewing crude *swoosh* imitations on to shirts and caps, not for the world market but for local consumption. . . . As the *Nike* symbol has grown ascendant in the marketplace of images, *Nike* has become the sign some people love to love and the sign others love to hate. . . .

*Nike* is a transnational corporation that links national economies into a complex web of global production arrangement. . . . Almost all production of shoes, apparel, and accessories is outsourced to contract suppliers in developing nations while the home office in Beaverton, Oregon designs, develops, and markets the branded goods. . . .

It is very difficult to compete in today's athletic footwear industry without engaging in the outsourcing of labor to relatively unskilled laborers in impoverished nations. Companies in the athletic footwear industry depend on the existence of poor Asian nations where there is a ready surplus of labor force in need of work and wages, even if those wages are below the poverty line. . . .

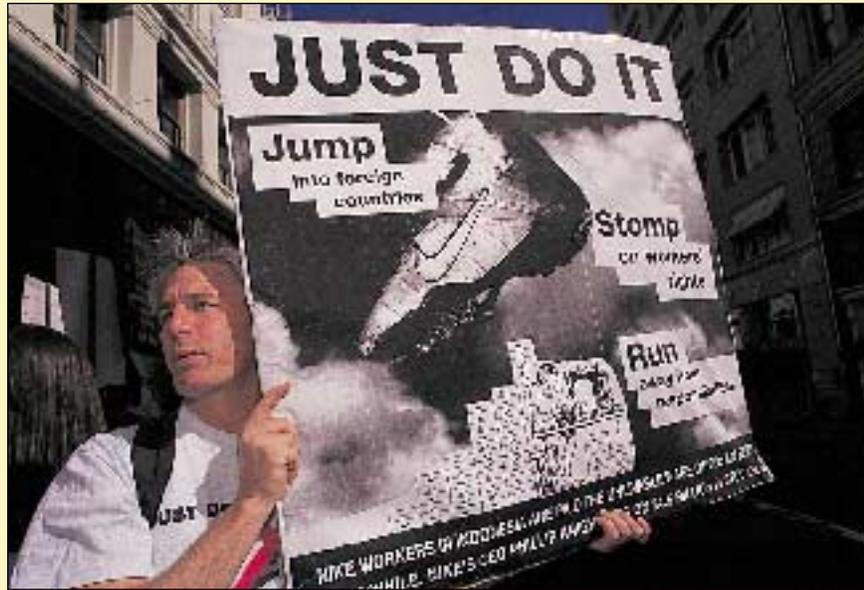
*Nike* speaks the language of universal rights, concern for children, transcendence over the categories of age, race, gender, disability, or any social stereotype. As moral philosophy, its images speak out against racism, sexism, and ageism. *Nike's* imagery celebrates sport, athletic activity, and play as universally rewarding categories. Playing makes for healthier, more productive citizens, and better self-actualized human beings. However, no matter what its imagery suggests, *Nike*, like any other capitalist firm, must operate within the relationships and constraints of competitive capitalist marketplaces. No matter how many P.L.A.Y. commercials *Nike* runs on TV, there will still be haunting images of production practices in Pakistan, Indonesia, and Vietnam. As the world grows more unified, it becomes increasingly difficult to suppress entirely those gaps between image and practice, between humanism and capitalism, between moral philosophy and the bottom line of corporate profit growth. (*Goldman and Papsan 1998:2, 6–8, 184*) ■



As sociologists Robert Goldman and Stephen Pappas note in their book *Nike Culture*, the Nike symbol (the swoosh) and philosophy (“Just do it”) have swept the world. People in all parts of the globe pay up to hundreds of dollars for a pair of Air Jordan shoes, and teams in all kinds of sporting arenas wear the Nike logo. Unfortunately, there is another side to Nike’s global dominance. Its products are made in harsh sweatshop conditions for very little compensation, mostly in the developing nations. One

group critical of Nike’s practices claimed in 1996 that the 45 Indonesian workers who participated in making a \$70 pair of Air Pegasus shoes shared a total of \$1.60. Other stories of Vietnamese and Chinese women who are subject to health and safety hazards, pitifully underpaid, and physically harassed by shop floor managers have also helped to fuel concern about human rights violations.

This concern has recently given rise to a nationwide coalition called United Students Against Sweatshops, based on college campuses across the country. Because this is an issue that combines women’s rights, immigrant rights, environmental concerns, and human rights, it has linked disparate groups on campus. Nike is not their only target. Many apparel manufacturers contract out their production to take advantage of cheap labor and overhead costs. The student movement—ranging from sit-ins and “knit-ins” to demonstrations and building occupation—has been aimed at ridding campus stores of all products made in sweatshops, both at home and abroad. Pressed by their students, many colleges and universities have agreed to adopt anti-sweatshop codes governing the products they make and stock on campus. And Nike and Reebok, partly in response to student protests, have raised the wages of some 100,000 workers in their Indonesian factories (to about 20 cents an hour—still far



Students protesting sweatshop labor in developing countries mock Nike with its own slogan: “Just do it.”

below what is needed to raise a family) (Appelbaum and Dreier 1999; Bonacich and Appelbaum 2000).

The global corporate culture of the apparel industry focuses our attention on worldwide stratification, as seen in the enormous gap between those enjoying wealth and those destitute from poverty. Ever since people first began to speculate about the nature of human society, their attention has been drawn to the differences between individuals and groups within any society. The term **social inequality** describes a condition in which members of a society have different amounts of wealth, prestige, or power. Some degree of social inequality characterizes every society.

When a system of social inequality is based on a hierarchy of groups, sociologists refer to it as **stratification**: a structured ranking of entire groups of people that perpetuates unequal economic rewards and power in a society. These unequal rewards are evident not only in the distribution of wealth and income, but even in the distressing mortality rates of impoverished communities. Stratification involves the ways in which one generation passes on social inequalities to the next, thereby producing groups of people arranged in rank order from low to high.

Stratification is a crucial subject of sociological investigation because of its pervasive influence on human interactions and institutions. It inevitably results

in social inequality because certain groups of people stand higher in social rankings, control scarce resources, wield power, and receive special treatment. As we will see, the consequences of stratification show up in the unequal distribution of wealth and income within and among societies. The term **income** refers to salaries and wages. By contrast, **wealth** is an inclusive term encompassing all of a person's material assets, including land, stocks, and other types of property.

In this chapter we will first examine three general systems of stratification. We will pay particular attention to Karl Marx's theories of class and to Max Weber's analysis of the components of stratification. In addition, we will consider and compare functionalist and conflict theorists' explanations for the existence of stratification.

We will then look at how sociologists measure so-

cial class. We will examine the consequences of stratification in terms of wealth and income, health, educational opportunities, and other aspects of life. Next, we will take a look at social mobility, the movement of individuals up and down the social hierarchies of the United States.

This chapter also focuses on who controls the world marketplace. The impact of colonialism and neocolonialism on social inequality will be studied, as will world systems analysis, the immense power of multinational corporations, and the consequences of modernization. After this macro-level examination of the disparity between rich and poor countries, we will focus on stratification *within* the nations of the world. Finally, in the social policy section, we will address the issue of welfare reform in North America and Europe. ■

## Understanding Stratification

### Systems of Stratification

Look at the three general systems of stratification examined here—slavery, castes, and social classes—as ideal types useful for purposes of analysis. Any stratification system may include elements of more than one type. For example, prior to the Civil War, you could find in the southern states of the United States social classes dividing Whites as well as the institutionalized enslavement of Blacks.

To understand these systems better, it may be helpful to review the distinction between *achieved status* and *ascribed status*. **Ascribed status** is a social position “assigned” to a person without regard for that person's unique characteristics or talents. By contrast, **achieved status** is a social position attained by a person largely through his or her own effort. The two are closely linked. The nation's most affluent families generally inherit wealth and status, while many members of racial and ethnic minorities inherit disadvantaged status. Age and gender, as well, are ascribed statuses that influence a person's wealth and social position.

### Slavery

The most extreme form of legalized social inequality for individuals or

groups is **slavery**. What distinguishes this oppressive system of stratification is that enslaved individuals are *owned* by other people. They treat these human beings as property, just as if they were household pets or appliances.

Slavery, an ascribed status, has varied in the way it has been practiced. In ancient Greece, the main source of slaves consisted of captives of war and piracy. Although succeeding generations could inherit slave status, it was not necessarily permanent. A person's status might change depending on which city-state happened to tri-



Jacob Lawrence's painting, *Harriet Tubman Series No. 9*, graphically illustrates the torment of slavery as once practiced in the United States. Slavery is the most extreme form of legalized social inequality.

umph in a military conflict. In effect, all citizens had the potential of becoming slaves or of being granted freedom, depending on the circumstances of history. By contrast, in the United States and Latin America, racial and legal barriers prevented the freeing of slaves.

### **Castes**

**Castes** are hereditary systems of rank, usually religiously dictated, that tend to be fixed and immobile. The caste system is generally associated with Hinduism in India and other countries. In India there are four major castes, called *varnas*. A fifth category of outcastes, referred to as *untouchables*, is considered to be so lowly and unclean as to have no place within this system of stratification. There are also many minor castes. Caste membership is an ascribed status (at birth, children automatically assume the same position as their parents). Each caste is quite sharply defined, and members are expected to marry within that caste.

Caste membership generally determines one's occupation or role as a religious functionary. An example of a lower caste in India is the *Dons*, whose main work is the undesirable job of cremating bodies. The caste system promotes a remarkable degree of differentiation. Thus, the single caste of chauffeurs has been split into two separate subcastes: drivers of luxury cars have a higher status than drivers of economy cars.

In recent decades, industrialization and urbanization have taken their toll on India's rigid caste system. Many villagers have moved to urban areas where their low-caste status is unknown. Schools, hospitals, factories, and public transportation facilitate contacts between different castes that were previously avoided at all costs. In addition, the government has tried to reform the caste system. India's constitution, adopted in 1950, includes a provision abolishing discrimination against untouchables, who had traditionally been excluded from temples, schools, and most forms of employment. Yet the caste system prevails, and its impact is now evident in electoral politics, as various political parties compete for the support of frustrated untouchable voters who constitute one-third of India's electorate. For the first time India has someone from an untouchable background serving in the symbolic but high-status position of president. Meanwhile, however, dozens of low-caste people continue to be killed for overstepping their lowly status in life (C. Dugger 1999; U. Schmetzer 1999).

### **Social Classes**

A **class system** is a social ranking based primarily on economic position in which achieved characteristics can influence social mobility. In contrast to slavery and caste systems, the boundaries between classes are imprecisely defined, and one can move from one stratum, or level, of society to another. Yet class systems maintain stable strat-

ification hierarchies and patterns of class divisions, and they too are marked by unequal distribution of wealth and power.

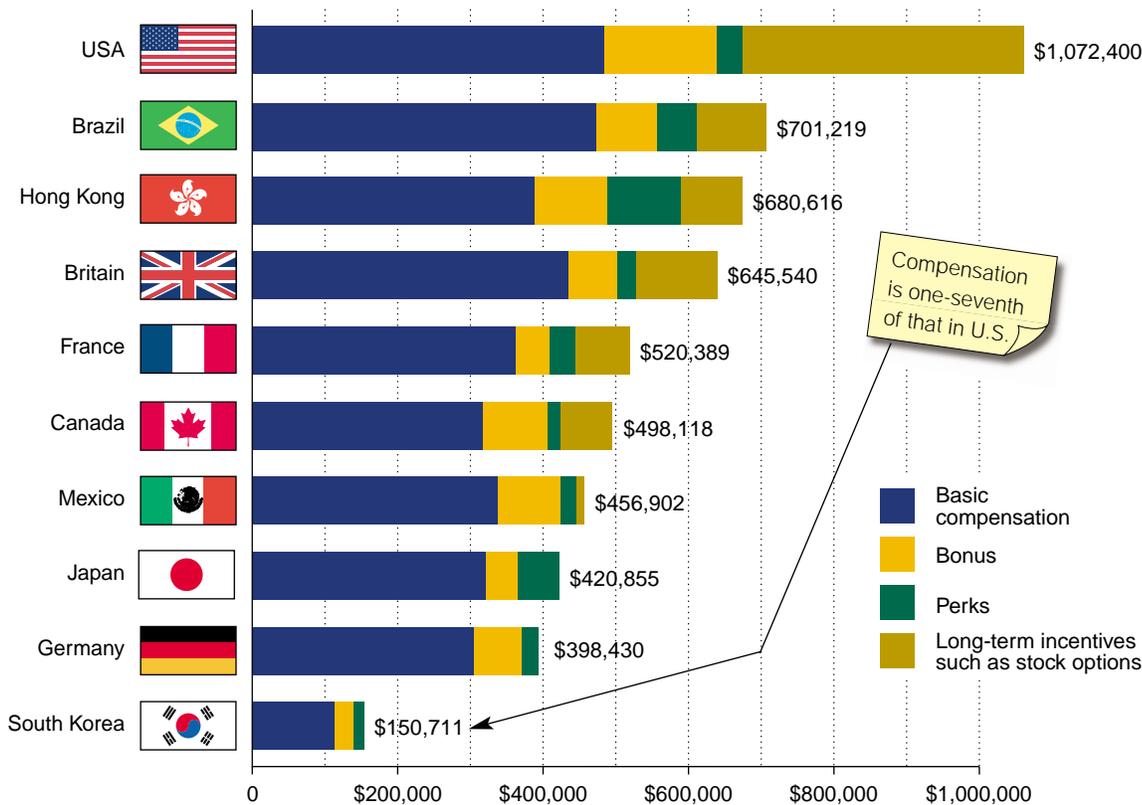
Income inequality is a basic characteristic of a class system. In 1999, the median household income in the United States was \$40,816. In other words, half of all households had higher incomes in that year and half had lower incomes. Yet this fact may not fully convey the income disparities in our society. In 1994, about 70,000 tax returns reported incomes in excess of \$1 million. At the same time, about 15 million households reported incomes under \$5,000. The people with the highest incomes, generally those heading private companies, earn well above even affluent wage earners. In Figure 8-1, we see how much better heads of U.S. corporations are reimbursed than CEOs (chief executive officers) in other industrial countries (Bureau of the Census 1997a:344; 2000d:vii).

Sociologist Daniel Rossides (1997) uses a five-class model to describe the class system of the United States: the upper class, the upper-middle class, the lower-middle class, the working class, and the lower class. While the lines separating social classes in his model are not so sharp as the divisions between castes, he shows that members of the five classes differ significantly in ways other than just income level.

Rossides categorized about 1 to 2 percent of the people of the United States as *upper class*, a group limited to the very wealthy. These people associate in exclusive clubs and social circles. By contrast, the *lower class*, consisting of approximately 20 to 25 percent of the population, disproportionately consists of Blacks, Hispanics, single mothers with dependent children, and people who cannot find regular work or must make do with low-paying work. This class lacks both wealth and income and is too weak politically to exercise significant power.

Both of these classes, at opposite ends of the nation's social hierarchy, reflect the importance of ascribed status and achieved status. Ascribed statuses such as race clearly influence a person's wealth and social position. And sociologist Richard Jenkins (1991) has researched how the ascribed status of being disabled marginalizes a person in the labor market of the United States. People with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to unemployment, are often poorly paid, and in many cases are on the lower rung of occupational ladders. Regardless of their actual performance on the job, the disabled are stigmatized as not "earning their keep." Such are the effects of ascribed status.

Sandwiched between the upper and lower classes in Rossides's model are the upper-middle class, the lower-middle class, and the working class. The *upper-middle class*, numbering about 10 to 15 percent of the population, is composed of professionals such as doctors,

**FIGURE 8-1****Around the World: What's a CEO Worth?**

Note: The average annual pay package of the chief executive officer (CEO) of an industrial company with annual revenues of \$250 million to \$500 million in 10 countries. Figures are from April 1998 and are not weighted to compensate for different costs of living or levels of taxation.

Source: Towers Perrin in A. Bryant 1999:Section 4, p. 1.

lawyers, and architects. They participate extensively in politics and take leadership roles in voluntary associations. The *lower-middle class*, which accounts for approximately 30 to 35 percent of the population, includes less affluent professionals (such as elementary school teachers and nurses), owners of small businesses, and a sizable number of clerical workers. While not all members of this varied class hold degrees from a college, they share the goal of sending their children there.

Rossides describes the *working class*—about 40 to 45 percent of the population—as people holding regular manual or blue-collar jobs. Certain members of this class, such as electricians, may have higher incomes than people in the lower-middle class. Yet, even if they have achieved some degree of economic security, they tend to identify with manual workers and their long history of involvement in the labor movement of the United States. Of Rossides's five classes, the working class is noticeably declining in size. In the economy of the United States, service and technical jobs are replacing positions involved in the actual manufacturing or transportation of goods.

Social class is one of the independent or explanatory variables most frequently used by social scientists to shed light on social issues. In later chapters, we will analyze the relationships between social class and divorce patterns (Chapter 11), religious behavior (Chapter 12), and formal schooling (Chapter 12), as well as other relationships in which social class is a variable.

### Perspectives on Stratification

Sociologists have engaged in heated debates and reached varying conclusions about stratification and social inequality. No theorist stressed the significance of class for society—and for social change—more strongly than Karl Marx. Marx viewed class differentiation as the crucial determinant of social, economic, and political inequality. By contrast, Max Weber questioned Marx's emphasis on the overriding importance of the economic sector and argued that stratification should be viewed as having many dimensions.

### **Karl Marx's View of Class Differentiation**

Sociologist Leonard Beeghley (1978:1) aptly noted that “Karl Marx was both a revolutionary and a social scientist.” Marx was concerned with stratification in all types of human societies, beginning with primitive agricultural tribes and continuing into feudalism. But his main focus was on the effects of economic inequality on all aspects of nineteenth-century Europe. The plight of the working class made him feel that it was imperative to strive for changes in the class structure of society.

In Marx's view, social relations during any period of history depend on who controls the primary mode of economic production, such as land or factories. Differential access to scarce resources shapes the relationship between groups. Thus, under the feudal estate system, most production was agricultural, and the land was owned by the nobility. Peasants had little choice but to work according to terms dictated by those who owned the land.

Using this type of analysis, Marx examined social relations within **capitalism**—an economic system in which the means of production are largely in private hands and the main incentive for economic activity is the accumulation of profits (Rosenberg 1991). Marx focused on the two classes that began to emerge as the estate system declined—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The **bourgeoisie**, or capitalist class, owns the means of production, such as factories and machinery, while the **proletariat** is the working class. In capitalist societies, the members of the bourgeoisie maximize profit in competition with other firms. In the process, they exploit workers, who must exchange their labor for subsistence wages. In Marx's view, members of each class share a distinctive culture. He was most interested in the culture of the proletariat, but he also examined the ideology of the bourgeoisie, through which it justifies its dominance over workers.

According to Marx, exploitation of the proletariat will inevitably lead to the destruction of the capitalist system because the workers will revolt. But, first, the working class must develop **class consciousness**—a subjective awareness of common vested interests and the need for collective political action to bring about social change. Workers must often overcome what Marx termed **false consciousness**, or an attitude held by members of a class that does not accurately reflect its objective position. A worker with false consciousness may adopt an individualistic viewpoint toward capitalist exploitation (“I am being exploited by *my* boss”). By contrast, the class-conscious worker realizes that *all* workers are being exploited by the bourgeoisie and have a common stake in revolution (Vanneman and Cannon 1987).

For Karl Marx, class consciousness is part of a collective process whereby the proletariat comes to identify the bourgeoisie as the source of its oppression. Revolutionary

leaders will guide the working class in its class struggle. Ultimately, the proletariat will overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie and the government (which Marx saw as representing the interests of capitalists) and will eliminate private ownership of the means of production. In his rather utopian view, classes and oppression will cease to exist in the postrevolutionary workers' state.

How accurate were Marx's predictions? He failed to anticipate the emergence of labor unions, whose power in collective bargaining weakens the stranglehold that capitalists maintain over workers. Moreover, as contemporary conflict theorists note, he did not foresee the extent to which political liberties and relative prosperity could contribute to “false consciousness.” Many people have come to view themselves as individuals striving for improvement within “free” societies with substantial mobility—rather than as downtrodden members of social classes facing a collective fate. Finally, Marx did not predict that Communist party rule would be established and later overthrown in the former Soviet Union and throughout Eastern Europe. Still, the Marxist approach to the study of class is useful in stressing the importance of stratification as a determinant of social behavior and the fundamental separation in many societies between two distinct groups, the rich and the poor.

### **Max Weber's View of Stratification**

Unlike Karl Marx, Max Weber insisted that no single characteristic (such as class) totally defines a person's position within the stratification system. Instead, writing in 1916, he identified three analytically distinct components of stratification: class, status, and power (Gerth and Mills 1958).

Weber used the term **class** to refer to people who have a similar level of wealth and income. For example, certain workers in the United States try to support their families through jobs that pay the federal minimum wage. According to Weber's definition, these wage earners constitute a class because they have the same economic position and fate. While Weber agreed with Marx on the importance of the economic dimension of stratification, he argued that the actions of individuals and groups could not be understood *solely* in economic terms.

Weber used the term **status group** to refer to people who rank the same in prestige or lifestyle. An individual gains status through membership in a desirable group, such as the medical profession. But status is not the same as economic class standing. In our culture, a successful pickpocket may be in the same income class as a college professor. Yet the thief is widely regarded as a member of a low-status group, while the professor holds high status.

For Weber, the third major component of stratification reflects a political dimension. **Power** is the ability to

exercise one's will over others. In the United States, power stems from membership in particularly influential groups, such as corporate boards of directors, government bodies, and interest groups. Conflict theorists generally agree that two major sources of power—big business and government—are closely interrelated (see Chapter 13).

In Weber's view, then, each of us has not one rank in society but three. Our position in a stratification system reflects some combination of class, status, and power. Each factor influences the other two, and in fact the rankings on these three dimensions often tend to coincide. John F. Kennedy came from an extremely wealthy family, attended exclusive preparatory schools, graduated from Harvard University, and went on to become president of the United States. Like Kennedy, many people from affluent backgrounds achieve impressive status and power.

At the same time, these dimensions of stratification may operate somewhat independently in determining a person's position. Harry S. Truman was a hat maker in his



How does it feel sitting in the chairperson's seat? In the United States a great deal of power resides with corporate boards of directors.

native town of Independence, Missouri, but he used a political power base to work his way up to the presidency of the United States. A widely published poet may achieve high status while earning a relatively modest income. Successful professional athletes have little power but enjoy a relatively high position in terms of class and status. To understand the workings of a culture more fully, sociologists must carefully evaluate the ways in which it distributes its most valued rewards, including wealth and income, status, and power (Duberman 1976; Gerth and Mills 1958).

### Is Stratification Universal?

Must some members of society receive greater rewards than others? Do people need to feel socially and economically superior to others? Can social life be organized without structured inequality? These questions have been debated for centuries, especially among political activists. Utopian socialists, religious minorities, and members of recent countercultures have all attempted to establish communities that, to some extent or other, would abolish inequality in social relationships.

Social science research has found that inequality exists in all societies—even the simplest. For example, when anthropologist Gunnar Landtman (1968, original edition 1938) studied the Kiwai Papuans of New Guinea, he initially noticed little differentiation among them. Every man in the village did the same work and lived in similar housing. However, on closer inspection, Landtman observed that certain Papuans—the men who were warriors, harpooners, and sorcerers—were described as “a little more high” than others. By contrast, villagers who were female, unemployed, or unmarried were considered “down a little bit” and were barred from owning land.

Stratification is universal in that all societies maintain some form of differentiation among members. Depending on its values, a society may assign people to distinctive ranks based on their religious knowledge, skill in hunting, beauty, trading expertise, or ability to provide health care. But why has such inequality developed in human societies? And how much differentiation among people, if any, is actually essential?

Functionalist and conflict sociologists offer contrasting explanations for the existence and necessity of social stratification. Functionalists maintain that a differential system of rewards and punishments is necessary for the efficient operation of society. Conflict theorists argue that competition for scarce resources results in significant political, economic, and social inequality.

### **Functionalist View**

Would people go to school for many years to become physicians if they could make as much money and gain as

much respect working as street cleaners? Functionalists say no, which is partly why they believe that a stratified society is universal.

In the view of Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore (1945), society must distribute its members among a variety of social positions. It must not only make sure that these positions are filled but also see that they are staffed by people with the appropriate talents and abilities. Rewards, including money and prestige, are based on the importance of a position and the relative scarcity of qualified personnel. Yet this assessment often devalues work performed by certain segments of society, such as women's work as homemakers or occupations traditionally filled by women or low-status work in fast-food outlets.

Davis and Moore argue that stratification is universal and that social inequality is necessary so that people will be motivated to fill functionally important positions. But, critics say, unequal rewards are not the only means of encouraging people to fill critical positions and occupations. Personal pleasure, intrinsic satisfaction, and value orientations also motivate people to enter particular careers. Functionalists agree but note that society must use some type of reward to motivate people to enter unpleasant or dangerous jobs and jobs that require a long training period. This response does not justify stratification systems in which status is largely inherited, such as slave or caste societies. Similarly, it is difficult to explain the high salaries our society offers to professional athletes or entertainers on the basis of how critical these jobs are to the survival of society (R. Collins 1975; Kerbo 2000; Tumin 1953, 1985).

Even if stratification is inevitable, the functionalist explanation for differential rewards does not explain the wide disparity between the rich and the poor. Critics of the functionalist approach point out that the richest 10 percent of households account for 20 percent of the nation's income in Sweden, 25 percent in France, and 30 percent in the United States. In their view, the level of income inequality found in contemporary industrial societies cannot be defended—even though these societies have a legitimate need to fill certain key occupations (World Bank 2000a:238–239).

### Conflict View

p. 11

The writings of Karl Marx are at the heart of conflict theory. Marx viewed history as a continuous struggle between the oppressors and the oppressed that would ultimately culminate in an egalitarian, classless society. In terms of stratification, he argued that the dominant class under capitalism—the bourgeoisie—manipulated the economic and political systems in order to maintain control over the exploited proletariat. Marx did not believe that stratification was inevitable, but he

did see inequality and oppression as inherent in capitalism (E. Wright et al. 1982).

Like Marx, contemporary conflict theorists believe that human beings are prone to conflict over such scarce resources as wealth, status, and power. However, where Marx focused primarily on class conflict, more recent theorists have extended this analysis to include conflicts based on gender, race, age, and other dimensions. British sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf is one of the most influential contributors to the conflict approach.

Dahrendorf (1959) modified Marx's analysis of capitalist society to apply to *modern* capitalist societies. For Dahrendorf, social classes are groups of people who share common interests resulting from their authority relationships. In identifying the most powerful groups in society, he includes not only the bourgeoisie—the owners of the means of production—but also the managers of industry, legislators, the judiciary, heads of the government bureaucracy, and others. In that respect, Dahrendorf has merged Marx's emphasis on class conflict with Weber's recognition that power is an important element of stratification (Cuff et al. 1990).

Conflict theorists, including Dahrendorf, contend that the powerful of today, like the bourgeoisie of Marx's time, want society to run smoothly so that they can enjoy their privileged positions. Because the status quo suits those with wealth, status, and power, they have a clear interest in preventing, minimizing, or controlling societal conflict.

One way for the powerful to maintain the status quo is to define and disseminate the society's dominant ideology. The term **dominant ideology** describes a set of cultural beliefs and practices that helps to maintain powerful social, economic, and political interests. For Karl Marx, the dominant ideology in a capitalist society serves the interests of the ruling class. From a conflict perspective, the social significance of the dominant ideology is that a society's most powerful groups and institutions not only control wealth and property, but, even more important, they control the means of producing beliefs about reality through religion, education, and the media (Abercrombie et al. 1980, 1990; Robertson 1988).

The powerful, such as leaders of government, also use limited social reforms to buy off the oppressed and reduce the danger of challenges to their dominance. For example, minimum wage laws and unemployment compensation unquestionably give some valuable assistance to needy men and women. Yet these reforms also serve to pacify those who might otherwise rebel. Of course, in the view of conflict theorists, such maneuvers can never entirely eliminate conflict, since workers will continue to demand equality, and the powerful will not give up their control of society.

p. 65

Conflict theorists see stratification as a major source of societal tension and conflict. They do not agree with Davis and Moore that stratification is functional for a society or that it serves as a source of stability. Rather, conflict sociologists argue that stratification will inevitably lead to instability and to social change (R. Collins 1975; L. Coser 1977).

### Lenski's Viewpoint

Let's return to the question posed earlier—"Is stratification universal?"—and consider the sociological response. Some form of differentiation is found in every culture, from the most primitive to the most advanced industrial societies of our time. Sociologist Gerhard Lenski, in his sociocultural evolution approach, described how economic systems change as their level of technology becomes more complex, beginning with hunting and gathering and culminating eventually with industrial society. In subsistence-based, hunting-and-gathering societies, people focus on survival. While some inequality and differentiation are evident, a stratification system based on social class does not emerge because there is no real wealth to be claimed.

As a society advances in technology, it becomes capable of producing a considerable surplus of goods. The emergence of surplus resources greatly expands the possibilities for inequality in status, influence, and power and allows a well-defined rigid social class system to develop. In order to minimize strikes, slowdowns, and industrial sabotage, the elites may share a portion of the economic surplus with the lower classes, but not enough to reduce their power and privilege.

As Lenski argued, the allocation of surplus goods and services controlled by those with wealth, status, and power reinforces the social inequality that accompanies stratification systems. While this reward system may once have served the overall purposes of society, as functionalists contend, the same cannot be said for the large disparities separating the haves from the have-nots in current societies. In contemporary industrial society, the degree of social and economic inequality far exceeds the need to provide for goods and services (Lenski 1966; Nolan and Lenski 1999).

## Stratification by Social Class

### Measuring Social Class

We continually assess how wealthy people are by looking at the cars they drive, the houses they live in, the clothes they wear, and so on. Yet it is not so easy to locate an individual within our social hierarchies as it would be in slavery or caste systems of stratification. To determine someone's class position, sociologists generally rely on the objective method.

The **objective method** of measuring social class views class largely as a statistical category. Researchers assign individuals to social classes on the basis of criteria such as occupation, education, income, and residence. The key to the objective method is that the *researcher*, rather than the person being classified, identifies an individual's class position.

The first step in using this method is to decide what indicators or causal factors will be measured objectively, whether wealth, income, education, or occupation. The prestige ranking of occupations has proved to be a useful indicator of a person's class position. For one thing, it is much easier to determine accurately than income or wealth. The term **prestige** refers to the respect and admiration that an occupation holds in a society. "My daughter, the physicist" connotes something very different from "my daughter, the waitress." Prestige is independent of the particular individual who occupies a job, a characteristic that distinguishes it from esteem. **Esteem** refers to the reputation that a specific person has earned within an occupation. Therefore, one can say that the position of president of the United States has high prestige, even though it has been occupied by people with varying degrees of esteem. A hairdresser may have the esteem of his clients, but he lacks the prestige of a corporation president.

Table 8-1 ranks the prestige of a number of well-known occupations. In a series of national surveys, sociologists assigned prestige rankings to about 500 occupations, ranging from physician to newspaper vendor. The highest possible prestige score was 100, and the lowest was 0. Physician, lawyer, dentist, and college professor were the most highly regarded occupations. Sociologists have used such data to assign prestige rankings to virtually all jobs and have found a stability in rankings from 1925 to 1991. Similar studies in other countries have also developed useful prestige rankings of occupations (Hodge and Rossi 1964; Lin and Xie 1988; Treiman 1977).

Studies of social class tend to neglect the occupations and incomes of *women* as determinants of social rank. In an exhaustive study of 589 occupations, sociologists Mary Powers and Joan Holmberg (1978) examined the impact of women's participation in the paid labor force on occupational status. Since women tend to dominate the relatively low-paying occupations, such as bookkeepers and child care workers, their participation in the workforce leads to a general upgrading of the status of most male-dominated occupations. More recent research conducted in both the United States and Europe has assessed the occupations of husbands *and* wives in determining the class positions of families (Sørensen 1994). With more than half of all married women now working outside the home (see Chapter 10), this approach seems long overdue, but it also raises some questions. For example, how is class or status to be judged in dual-career families—by the occu-

Table 8-1 Prestige Rankings of Occupations

Occupation	Score	Occupation	Score
Physician	86	Secretary	46
Lawyer	75	Insurance agent	45
Dentist	74	Bank teller	43
College professor	74	Nurse's aide	42
Architect	73	Farmer	40
Clergy	69	Correctional officer	40
Pharmacist	68	Receptionist	39
Registered nurse	66	Barber	36
High school teacher	66	Child care worker	35
Accountant	65	Hotel clerk	32
Airline pilot	60	Bus driver	32
Police officer and detective	60	Truck driver	30
Prekindergarten teacher	55	Salesworker (shoes)	28
Librarian	54	Garbage collector	28
Firefighter	53	Waiter and waitress	28
Social worker	52	Bartender	25
Electrician	51	Farm worker	23
Funeral director	49	Janitor	22
Mail carrier	47	Newspaper vendor	19

Sources: J. Davis and Smith 1999:1,242–1,246; Nakao and Treas 1990, 1994; NORC 1994.

pation regarded as having greater prestige, the average, or some other combination of the two occupations?

Sociologists—and, in particular, feminist sociologists in Great Britain—are drawing on new approaches in assessing women's social class standing. One approach is to focus on the individual (rather than the family or household) as the basis of categorizing a woman's class position. Thus, a woman would be classified based on her own occupational status rather than that of her spouse (O'Donnell 1992).

Another feminist effort to measure the contribution of women to the economy reflects a more clearly political agenda. International Women Count Network, a global grassroots feminist organization, has sought to give a monetary value to women's unpaid work. Besides pro-

viding symbolic recognition of women's role in labor, this value would also be used to calculate pension programs and benefits that are based on wages received. In 1995 the United Nations placed an \$11 trillion price tag on unpaid labor by women, largely in child care, housework, and agriculture. Whatever the figure today, the continued undercounting of many workers' contribution to a family and to an entire economy makes virtually all measures of stratification in need of reform (United Nations Development Programme 1995; Wages for Housework Campaign 1999).

Another complication in measuring social class is that advances in statistical methods and computer technology have multiplied the factors used to define class under the objective method. No longer are sociologists limited to annual income and education in evaluating a person's class position. Today, studies use as criteria the value of homes, sources of income, assets, years in present occupations, neighborhoods, and considerations regarding dual careers. Adding these variables will not necessarily paint a different picture of class differentiation in the United States, but it does allow sociologists to measure class in a more complex and multidimensional way.

Whatever the technique used to measure class, the sociologist is interested in real and often dramatic

differences in power, privilege, and opportunity in a society. The study of stratification is a study of inequality. Nowhere is this more evident than in the distribution of wealth and income.

## Consequences of Social Class

### Wealth and Income

By all measures, income in the United States is distributed unevenly. Nobel prizewinning economist Paul Samuelson has described the situation in the following words: "If we made an income pyramid out of a child's blocks, with each layer portraying \$500 of income, the peak would be far higher than Mount Everest, but most people would be

within a few feet of the ground” (Samuelson and Nordhaus 1998:344).

Recent data support Samuelson’s analogy. As Figure 8-2 shows, in 1999 the richest fifth of the population (or 20 percent of the nation)—earning \$79,375 or more—accounted for 49 percent of total after-tax income. By contrast, the bottom fifth—earning \$17,196 or less—accounted for only 4 percent of after-tax income.

There has been modest redistribution of income in the United States over the past 70 years. From 1929 through 1970, the government’s economic and tax policies shifted income somewhat to the poor. However, in the last three decades—and especially during the 1980s—federal budgetary policies favored the affluent. Moreover, while the salaries of highly skilled workers and professionals have continued to rise, the wages of less skilled workers have *decreased* when controlled for inflation. As a result, the Census Bureau reports that regardless

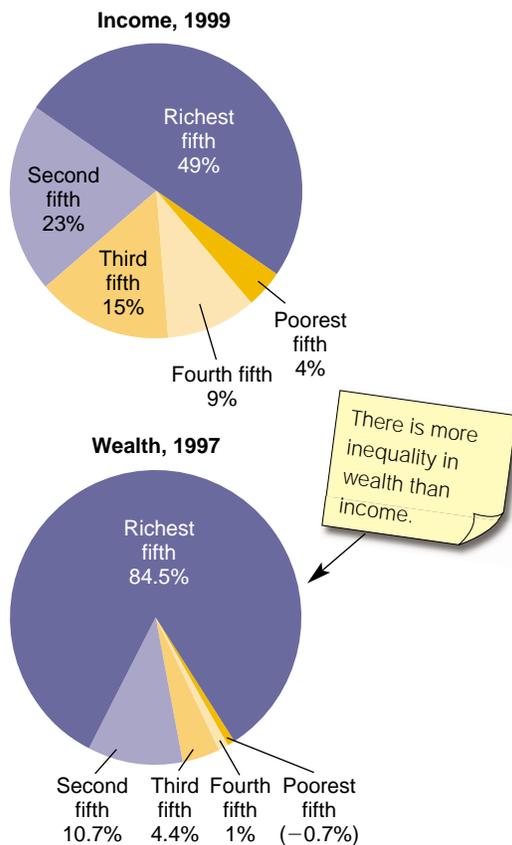
of the measure used, income inequality rose substantially between 1967 and the early 1990s, although it has remained unchanged since then (Bureau of the Census 2000d:xiii; Jones and Weinberg 2000).

Survey data show that only 38 percent of people in the United States believe that government should take steps to reduce the income disparity between the rich and the poor. By contrast, 80 percent of people in Italy, 66 percent in Germany, and 65 percent in Great Britain support governmental efforts to reduce income inequality. It is not surprising, then, that many European countries provide more extensive “safety nets” to assist and protect the disadvantaged. By contrast, the strong cultural value placed on individualism in the United States leads to greater possibilities for both economic success and failure (Lipset 1996).

Wealth in the United States is much more unevenly distributed than income. As Figure 8-2 shows, in 1997 the richest fifth of the population held 85 percent of the nation’s wealth. Government data indicate that more than one out of every 100 households had assets over \$2.4 million, while one-fifth of all households were in debt and therefore had a negative net worth. Researchers have also found a dramatic disparity in wealth between African Americans and Whites. This disparity is evident even when educational backgrounds are held constant: the households of college-educated Whites have about three times as much wealth as the households of college-educated Blacks (Hurst et al. 1996; Kennickell et al. 2000; Oliver and Shapiro 1995).

## FIGURE 8-2

### Comparison of Distribution of Income and Wealth in the United States

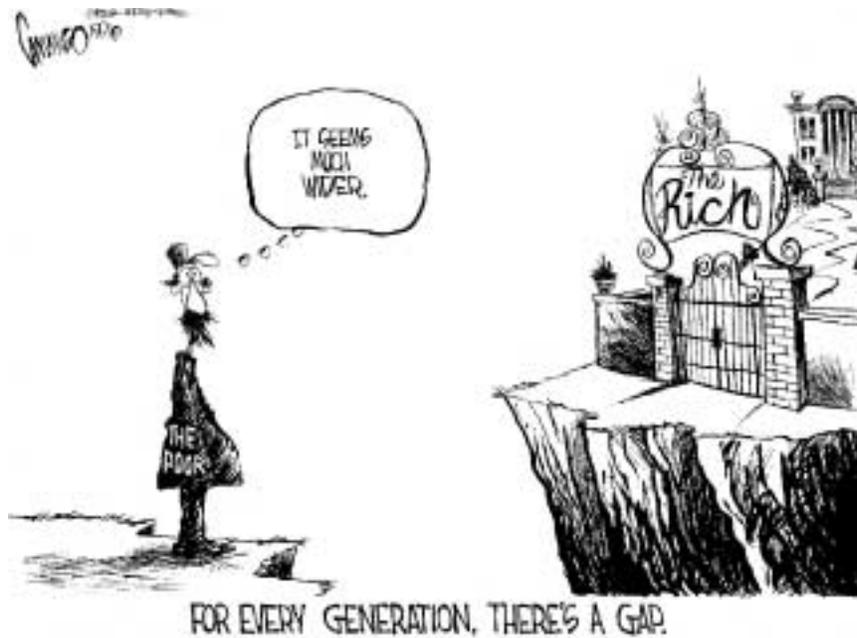


Note: Data on wealth do not add to 100 percent due to rounding.  
Sources: Income data (household) are from Bureau of the Census 2000d: B6. Data on wealth are from Wolff 1999.

### Poverty

Approximately one out of every nine people in this country lives below the poverty line established by the federal government. In 1999, 32.3 million people were living in poverty. The economic boom of the 1990s passed these people by. A 2000 Bureau of the Census report showed that one in five households had trouble meeting basic needs—everything from paying the utility bills to buying dinner. In this section, we’ll consider just how we define “poverty” and who is included in that category (K. Bauman 1999; Dalaker and Proctor 2000:1).

**Studying Poverty** The efforts of sociologists and other social scientists to better understand poverty are complicated by the difficulty of defining it. This problem is evident even in government programs that conceive of poverty in either absolute or relative terms. **Absolute poverty** refers to a minimum level of subsistence that no family should be expected to live below. This standard theoretically remains unchanged from year to year. Policies concerning minimum wages, housing standards, or school lunch programs for the poor imply a need to bring citizens up to some predetermined level of exis-



Other observers dispute this view. They argue that the poverty line may actually overestimate the number of low-income people because it fails to consider noncash benefits (such as Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, public housing, and health care and other fringe benefits provided by some employers). In response, the Bureau of the Census has considered several different definitions of poverty; they showed at most a 1.4 percent lower rate. That is, if the official poverty threshold places 13 percent of the population in the category of the poor, the poverty estimate including *all* these noncash benefits would account for about 11.6 percent of the population (K. Short et al. 1999; Uchitelle 1999).

tence. For example, in 1997 the federal minimum wage rate was raised to \$5.15 an hour. Even so, when one takes inflation into account, this standard was actually *lower* than what workers were guaranteed at any time from 1956 through 1982 (Bureau of the Census 1999a:497).

By contrast, **relative poverty** is a floating standard of deprivation by which people at the bottom of a society, whatever their lifestyles, are judged to be disadvantaged *in comparison with the nation as a whole*. Most of our country's current social programs view poverty in relative terms. Therefore, even if the poor of the 1990s are better off in absolute terms than the poor of the 1930s or 1960s, they are still seen as deserving special assistance from government.

One commonly used measure of relative poverty is the federal government's *poverty line*, a money income figure adjusted annually to reflect the consumption requirements of families based on their size and composition. The poverty line serves as an official definition of which people are poor. In 1999, for example, any family of four with a combined income of \$17,029 or less fell below the poverty line. This definition determines which individuals and families will be eligible for certain government benefits (Dalaker and Proctor 2000:1).

In the 1990s, there was growing debate over the validity of the poverty line as a measure of poverty and a standard for allocating government benefits. Some critics charge that the poverty line is too low; they note that the federal government continues to use 20-year-old nutritional standards in assessing people's level of poverty. If the poverty line is too low, then government data will underestimate the extent of poverty in the United States, and many deserving poor citizens will fail to receive benefits.

**Who Are the Poor?** Not only does the category of the poor defy any simple definition, it counters common stereotypes about "poor people." For example, many people in the United States believe that the vast majority of the poor are able to work but will not. Yet many poor adults *do* work outside the home, although only a portion (12 percent of all low-income adults) work full-time throughout the year. About 60 percent of poor adults do not work, primarily because they are ill or disabled, are maintaining a home, or are retired (Dalaker and Proctor 2000:18).

A sizable number of the poor live in urban slums, but a majority live outside these poverty areas. Poverty is no stranger in rural areas, ranging from Appalachia to hard-hit farming regions to Native American reservations. Included among the poor of the United States are elderly people, children living in single-parent families with their mothers, and over 10,000 men in military service who cannot adequately support their large families. Table 8-2 provides additional statistical information regarding these low-income people in the United States. (The situation of the most destitute poor in the United States and worldwide, the homeless, will be examined in the social policy section of Chapter 15.)

Since World War II, an increasing proportion of the poor people of the United States have been women—many of whom are divorced or never-married mothers. Currently, almost two out of every three adults classified as poor by the federal government are women. In 1959, female householders accounted for 26 percent of the nation's poor; by 1998, that figure had risen to 57 percent (see Table 8-2). This alarming trend, known as the

Table 8-2 Who Are the Poor in the United States?

Group	Percentage of the Population of the United States	Percentage of the Poor of the United States
Under 18 years old	26%	38%
18 to 64 years old	61	52
65 years and older	13	10
Whites (non-Hispanic)	83	46
Blacks	12	26
Hispanics	11	23
Asians and Pacific Islanders	4	4
Married couples and families with male householders	82	47
Families with female householders	18	53

Notes: Data are for 1999, as reported by the Bureau of the Census in 2000.

Source: Dalaker and Proctor 2000:vi.

*feminization of poverty*, is evident not just in the United States but around the world.

About half of all women in the United States living in poverty are “in transition,” coping with an economic crisis caused by the departure, disability, or death of a husband. The other half tend to be economically dependent either on the welfare system or on friends and relatives living nearby. A major factor in the feminization of poverty has been the increase in families with women as single heads of the household (see Chapter 11). In 1999, 11.8 percent of all people in the United States lived in poverty, compared to 27.8 percent of households headed by single mothers.

Conflict theorists and other observers trace the higher rates of poverty among women to three distinct factors: the difficulty in finding affordable child care, sexual harassment, and sex discrimination in the labor market (see Chapter 10) (Dalaker and Proctor 2000:vi).

During the last 20 years, female-headed families have become an increasing proportion of Canada’s low-income population. This trend is also noticeable throughout Europe, in developing countries, and even in three widely differing nations whose legislation on behalf of women is the most advanced in the world: Israel, Sweden, and Russia. In

these countries, national health care programs, housing subsidies, and other forms of government assistance cushion the impact of poverty somewhat, yet the feminization of poverty still advances (Abowitz 1986; Stanley 1995; Statistics Sweden 1999).

In 1995, 45 percent of poor people in the United States were living in central cities. These highly visible urban residents are the focus of most governmental efforts to alleviate poverty. Yet, according to many observers, the plight of the urban poor is growing worse, owing to the devastating interplay of inadequate education and limited employment prospects. Traditional employment opportunities in the industrial sector are largely closed to the unskilled poor. Past and present discrimination heightens these problems for low-income urban residents who are Black and Hispanic (Baugher and Lamison-White 1996:vii).

Sociologist William Julius Wilson (1980, 1987, 1989, 1996) and

other social scientists have used the term *underclass* to describe the long-term poor who lack training and skills. While estimates vary depending on the definition, in 1990 the underclass comprised more than 3 million adults in the United States, not including the elderly. In central cities, about 49 percent of the underclass are African American, 29 percent are Hispanic, 17 percent are White, and 5 percent are “other” (O’Hare and Curry-White 1992).

Conflict theorists, among others, have expressed alarm at the portion of the nation’s population living on this lower rung of the stratification hierarchy and at society’s reluctance to address the lack of economic opportunities for these people. Often, portraits of the underclass seem to “blame the victims” for their own plight while ignoring other factors that push people into poverty. In Box 8-1 we consider Wilson’s latest research into the persistence of urban poverty.

Poverty, of course, is not a new phenomenon. Yet the concept of the underclass describes a chilling development: individuals and families, whether employed or unemployed, who are beyond the reach of any safety net provided by existing social programs. Moreover, membership in the underclass is not an intermittent condition



Woodlawn, an urban neighborhood on Chicago's South Side, used to boast more than 800 commercial and industrial establishments. Today, some 50 years later, there are about 100 left, mostly barber shops, thrift stores, and small catering businesses. One Woodlawn resident described the changes on returning after an absence of many years: "I was just really appalled. . . . those resources are just gone, completely. . . . And . . . housing, everybody has moved, there are vacant lots everywhere" (Wilson 1996:5). Another South Side resident noted, "Jobs were plentiful in the past. You could walk out of the house and get a job. . . . Now, you can't find anything. . . . The majority they want to work but they can't find work" (p. 36). When opportunities cease to exist, discouragement sets in. An unmarried welfare mother of three put it this way: "Sometimes you can try and then you say 'I'm tired of trying'" (p. 77).

It has been more than 30 years since President Lyndon Johnson launched a series of federal programs known as the "war on poverty." Yet poverty is still with us as we move past the year 2000, and efforts continue to identify its causes and solutions. Sociologist and past president of the American Sociology Association William Julius Wilson has undertaken a major study of poverty using surveys, interviews, and existing census data from 1987 to the present. His Urban Poverty and Family Life Study (UPFLS) has investigated Chicago neighborhoods with poverty rates of at least 20 percent.

Wilson and his colleagues have noted that the jobless increasingly dominate low-income neighborhoods. As time passes, there are fewer and fewer middle-class households. The absence of full-time workers is especially noticeable in African American poor neighborhoods. As a local community becomes more jobless, it is less able to support neighborhood services such as a pharmacy or

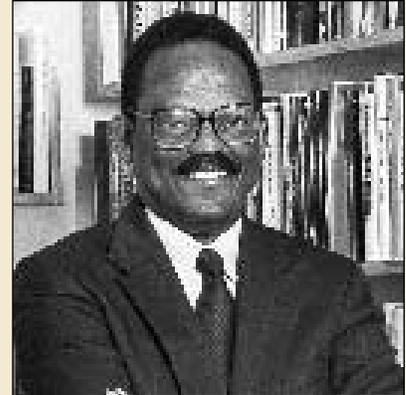
hardware store or even a movie theater. As a result, these poverty neighborhoods become increasingly marginal to the economic, social, and cultural life of the city. Wilson sees this as a movement away from what the historian Albert Spear (1967) termed an *institutional ghetto* (where viable social institutions did exist) to the *jobless ghetto* of today.

What drives the persistence of poverty in urban areas? According to Wilson, it is primarily the exodus of decent-paying jobs, especially in the manufacturing sector. In the last several decades, almost all improvements in productivity have been associated with improved technology and skilled workers. Manufacturers no longer rely so much on assembly-line workers, who often enjoyed not only employment but also labor union fringe benefits and some protection from layoffs. A generation ago, the typical ghetto resi-

When opportunities cease to exist, discouragement sets in.

dent might have worked as a machine operator or assembler, but today's resident, if even successful in finding wage labor, is working as a waiter or janitor. Not only have good-paying jobs disappeared from the urban center, but the new jobs that are available tend to be professional, managerial, and technical positions requiring years of post-secondary education.

For women, especially Black women, the situation is even worse. Wilson found that African American women were significantly isolated from people who were working, had some college education, or were married. This makes it even more difficult for people to move beyond the poverty areas into the larger economy and the better employment opportunities



William Julius Wilson, a sociologist at Harvard University, specializes in the study of urban poverty.

found there. Thus, in Wilson's view, it is the economy and the social structure that supports it, not the poor, that need reforming.

Reflecting on inner-city joblessness, Wilson proposes some initiatives, such as national performance standards in education in order to upgrade the minimum level of schooling that the youth in poverty areas receive. His research also shows the clear need for expansion of child care and other family support mechanisms. In addition, he calls for developing metropolitan solutions to bridge the central cities and suburbs. Wilson admits that these approaches are not likely to meet with political acceptance or be easily adopted, but they do underscore the idea that there is no simple solution to reducing poverty in urban areas if viable employment opportunities disappear.

### Let's Discuss

1. Has a community you lived in or near seen jobs disappear? What changes took place in the neighborhood as a result?
2. What causes joblessness in urban areas? What can be done to counter it?



Poverty hits women particularly hard throughout the world, a situation known as the “feminization of poverty.” Shown here are women and children in India.

but a long-term attribute. The underclass is understandably alienated from the larger society and engages sporadically in illegal behavior. These illegal acts do little to encourage society to address the long-term problems of the underclass.

Analyses of the poor reveal that they are not a static social class. The overall composition of the poor changes continually, with some individuals and families moving above the poverty level after a year or two while others slip below it. Still, there are hundreds of thousands of people who remain in poverty for many years at a time. African Americans are more likely than Whites to be “persistently poor.” Over a 20-year period, 12 percent of Whites lived below the poverty line for 5 or more consecutive years, and 5 percent of Whites lived below the poverty line for 7 or more consecutive years. In this same 20-year period, African Americans were twice as likely as Whites to experience long poverty spells. Two studies in 1998 documented that Hispanics are also displaying chronic or long-term periods of poverty. Both Hispanics and Blacks are less likely than Whites to leave the welfare rolls as a result of welfare reform discussed in the policy section of this chapter (J. DeParle 1998; Gottschalk et al. 1994; M. Naifeh 1998).

**Explaining Poverty** Why is it that pervasive poverty continues within a nation of such vast wealth? Sociologist Herbert Gans (1995) has applied functionalist analysis to the existence of poverty and argues that various segments

of society actually *benefit* from the existence of the poor. Gans has identified a number of social, economic, and political functions that the poor perform for society, among them the following:

- The presence of poor people means that society’s dirty work—physically dirty or dangerous, dead-end and underpaid, undignified and menial jobs—will be performed at low cost.
- Poverty creates jobs for occupations and professions that “service” the poor. It creates both legal employment (public health experts, welfare case-workers) and illegal jobs (drug dealers, numbers “runners”).
- The identification and punishment of the poor as deviants uphold the legitimacy of conventional social norms

p. 167

and “mainstream values” regarding hard work, thrift, and honesty.

- Within a relatively hierarchical society, the existence of poor people guarantees the higher status of the more affluent. As psychologist William Ryan (1976) has noted, affluent people may justify inequality (and gain a measure of satisfaction) by “blaming the victims” of poverty for their disadvantaged condition.
- Because of the lack of political power, the poor often absorb the costs of social change. Under the policy of deinstitutionalization, mental patients released from long-term hospitals have been “dumped” primarily into low-income communities and neighborhoods. Similarly, halfway houses for rehabilitated drug abusers are often rejected by more affluent communities and end up in poorer neighborhoods.

In Gans’s view, then, poverty and the poor actually satisfy positive functions for many nonpoor groups in the United States.

### **Stratification and Life Chances**

Max Weber saw class as closely related to people’s *life chances*—that is, their opportunities to provide themselves with material goods, positive living conditions, and favorable life experiences (Gerth and Mills 1958). Life chances are reflected in such measures as housing, educa-



Functionalists point out that some people, such as these New York City social workers (standing), actually *benefit* from the existence of poverty. Many occupations and professions “service” the poor.

tion, and health. Occupying a higher position in a society improves your life chances and brings greater access to social rewards. By contrast, people in the lower social classes are forced to devote a larger proportion of their limited resources to the necessities of life.

The affluent and powerful not only have more material possessions than others; they also benefit in many nonmaterial ways. This fact was brought home to us by the hit motion picture *Titanic*, which showed that one’s “life” chances had literal consequences in determining who would survive the ship’s sinking in 1912 (see Box 8-2). We can also see the effects of life chances in education. Children from high-income families with low high school achievement in the United States are more likely to attend college than are children from less affluent families with the highest levels of achievement. This gap in educational opportunities has remained significant since 1972 (National Center for Education Statistics 1997).

In the United States, there are clear financial consequences associated with having (or not having) a college degree. For example, a male in 1999 with a college degree typically earned \$47,325 compared to a male high school graduate who earned only \$27,240 a year (Bureau of the Census 2000:28).

Class position also affects health in important ways. In fact, class is increasingly being viewed as an important predictor of health. The affluent avail themselves of improved health services while such advances bypass poor people. The chances of a child’s dying during the first year of life are

much higher in poor families than among the middle class. This higher infant mortality rate results in part from the inadequate nutrition received by low-income expectant mothers. Even when they survive infancy, the poor are more likely than the affluent to suffer from serious, chronic illnesses such as arthritis, bronchitis, diabetes, and heart disease. In addition, the poor are less likely to be protected from the high costs of illness by private health insurance. They may have jobs without health insurance, may work part-time and not be eligible for employee health benefits, or may simply be unable to afford the premiums (E. Goode 1999; R. Mills 2000).

All these factors contribute to differences in the death rates of the poor and the affluent. Studies published in the 1990s, drawing on health data in the United States from

1986 through 1993, document the impact of class (as well as gender and race) on mortality. Among people whose family incomes were less than \$9,000, the death rates per 1,000 people 25 to 64 years old were as follows: Black men, 19.5; White men, 16.0; Black women, 7.6; White women, 6.5. By contrast, among people whose family incomes were \$25,000 or more, the comparable death rates were Black men, 3.6; White men, 2.4; Black women, 2.3; White women, 1.6. The researchers add that the gap in the death rate between Blacks and Whites is widening. Ill health among the poor only serves to increase the likelihood that the poor will remain impoverished (Federman et al. 1996; Pappas et al. 1993; see also Guralnik et al. 1993).

Like disease, crime can be particularly devastating when it attacks the poor. According to the 1994 National Crime Victimization Survey, people in low-income families were more likely to be assaulted, raped, or robbed than were the most affluent people. Furthermore, if accused of a crime, a person with low income and status is likely to be represented by an overworked public defender. Whether innocent or guilty, the accused may sit in jail for months, unable to raise bail (Perkins and Klaus 1996).

Even the administration of state lotteries underscores differences in life chances. A lottery participant is six times more likely to be struck by lightning than to win the jackpot, yet states target low-income residents in their lottery promotions. Lottery terminals are more heavily concentrated in poor neighborhoods than in wealthy communities. Lottery advertisements appear most frequently



## Social Class in the Movie *Titanic* and on the *SS Titanic*



The movie *Titanic* has been phenomenally successful. Millions of people in the United States, Japan, Germany, China, and elsewhere in the world have paid to see the film. By 2000, box office sales had surpassed \$1.8 billion internationally, making it the most successful motion picture ever. While the special effects depicting the ship's breakup on an iceberg were spectacular, film audiences were mainly drawn to the story of how aristocratic 17-year-old Rose, facing a loveless marriage to a society figure, became attracted to working-class Jack.

They were not traveling together on that ill-fated maiden voyage of the *Titanic*. Rose was ensconced in first-class

luxury while Jack was traveling in third-class, or steerage, thanks to a ticket he won in a poker game. Still, for purposes of the plot, they managed to meet on board. Jack had to borrow a suit and act “properly” in order to pass the class line and gain entrance to the stuffy first-class dining room. But Rose had no trouble leaving her rich friends for a bawdy evening among those in the lower decks.

The story of Rose and Jack was attractive because it was so romantic. After all, it typified a social class fantasy of the rich and poor falling in love and then struggling to survive. The theme

there were still contingency plans for leading passengers to lifeboats in case of emergency. There was one glitch: These procedures were established only for first- and second-class passengers. Approximately 62 percent of the first-class passengers came away alive; even one-third of the first-class male passengers survived, despite a rule of “women and children first.” In third class, only 25 percent of the passengers survived.

Did the crew and the White Star Line purposely make the 381 steerage passengers expendable? There is no reason to think that, but, like all poorer people on land, they were given less thought and sometimes no thought at all. The first attempt to alert steerage passengers to the need to head to the boat deck came at least 45 minutes after the other passengers were alerted. Clogged passageways made it difficult for steerage passengers to find the lifeboats without being carefully guided. Jack's real-life counterparts had little chance to survive the calamity. Stratification does make a difference for a person's life chances.

**The first attempt to alert steerage passengers to the need to head to the boat deck came at least 45 minutes after the other passengers were alerted.**

of love between social class misfits is not new to motion pictures—consider Eliza Doolittle and Professor Henry Higgins in *My Fair Lady* and Vivian Ward and Edward Lewis in *Pretty Woman*. However, the fictional tale of Rose and Jack is particularly ironic because it uses as a backdrop a real tragedy that reinforces the fact that social inequality outweighs any iceberg.

When the *Titanic* sank in 1912, 1,502 passengers and crew members perished and only 705 survived. The luxury liner was supposed to be “unsinkable,” but



### Let's Discuss

1. If you were a passenger on the *Titanic*, how would you be able to distinguish the upper and lower classes? What features on board kept the classes separate?
2. Why did so many more first-class passengers survive the ship's sinking than did lower-class passengers?

Sources: Butler 1998; K. Crouse 1999; Riding 1998.

at the beginning of each month, when Social Security and public assistance checks arrive. Based on studies of lottery purchases, state lottery executives view the poor as more likely than the affluent to spend a high portion of their earnings for the very unlikely chance of becoming an instant millionaire (Nibert 2000; Novak and Schmid 1999).

Some people have hoped that the Internet revolution would help level the playing field by making information and markets uniformly available. Unfortunately, however, not everyone is able to get onto the “infrastructure,” and so yet another aspect of social inequality has emerged—the *digital divide*. The poor, minorities,

and those who live in rural communities and inner cities are not getting connected at home or at work. A recent government study found that despite falling computer prices, the Internet gap between the haves and have-nots has not narrowed. For example, while 42 percent of all households have a computer, these computers are in about 80 percent of households with family incomes over \$75,000 and in fewer than 16 percent in which families make less than \$20,000. As wealthier people start to buy high-speed Internet connections, they will be able to take advantage of even more sophisticated interactive services and the digital divide will grow even larger (National Telecommunications Information Administration 1999).

Wealth, status, and power may not ensure happiness, but they certainly provide additional ways of coping with one's problems and disappointments. For this reason, the opportunity for advancement is of special significance to those who are on the bottom of society looking up. These people want the rewards and privileges that are granted to high-ranking members of a culture.

## Social Mobility

Ronald Reagan's father was a barber, and Jimmy Carter began as a peanut farmer, yet each man eventually achieved the most powerful and prestigious position in our country. The rise of a child from a poor background to the presidency—or to some other position of great prestige, power, or financial reward—is an example of social mobility. The term **social mobility** refers to movement of individuals or groups from one position of a society's stratification system to another. But how significant—how frequent, how dramatic—is mobility in a class society such as the United States?

### Open versus Closed Class Systems

Sociologists use the terms *open class system* and *closed class system* to indicate the amount of social mobility in a society. An **open system** implies that the position of each individual is influenced by the person's *achieved* status. An open class system encourages competition among members of society. The United States is moving toward this ideal type as it attempts to reduce barriers faced by women, racial and ethnic minorities, and people born in lower social classes.

At the other extreme of social mobility is the **closed system**, which allows little or no possibility of moving up. The slavery and caste systems of stratification are examples of closed systems. In such societies, social placement is based on *ascribed* statuses, such as race or family background, which cannot be changed.

## Types of Social Mobility

An airline pilot who becomes a police officer moves from one social position to another of the same rank. Each occupation has the same prestige ranking: 60 on a scale ranging from a low of 0 to a high of 100 (see Table 8-1 on page 197). Sociologists call this kind of movement **horizontal mobility**. However, if the pilot were to become a lawyer (prestige ranking of 75), he or she would experience **vertical mobility**, the movement from one social position to another of a different rank. Vertical mobility can also involve moving *downward* in a society's stratification system, as would be the case if the airline pilot becomes a bank teller (ranking of 43). Pitirim Sorokin (1959, original edition 1927) was the first sociologist to distinguish between horizontal and vertical mobility. Most sociological analysis, however, focuses on vertical rather than horizontal mobility.

One way of examining vertical social mobility is to contrast intergenerational and intragenerational mobility. **Intergenerational mobility** involves changes in the social position of children relative to their parents. Thus, a plumber whose father was a physician provides an example of downward intergenerational mobility. A film star whose parents were both factory workers illustrates upward intergenerational mobility.

**Intragenerational mobility** involves changes in social position within a person's adult life. A woman who enters the paid labor force as a teacher's aide and eventually becomes superintendent of the school district experiences upward intragenerational mobility. A man who becomes a taxicab driver after his accounting firm goes bankrupt undergoes downward intragenerational mobility.

### Social Mobility in the United States

The belief in upward mobility is an important value in our society. Does this mean that the United States is indeed the land of opportunity? Not unless such ascriptive characteristics as race, gender, and family background have ceased to be significant in determining one's future prospects. We can see the impact of these factors in the occupational structure.

#### Occupational Mobility

Two sociological studies conducted a decade apart offer insight into the degree of mobility in the nation's occupational structure (Blau and Duncan 1967; Featherman and Hauser 1978). Taken together, these investigations lead to several noteworthy conclusions. First, occupational mobility (both intergenerational and intragenerational) has been common among males. Approximately 60 to 70 percent of sons are employed in higher-ranked occupations than their fathers.

Second, although there is a great deal of mobility in the United States, much of it covers a very “short distance.” That is, people who reach an occupational level different from that of their parents usually advance or fall back only one or two out of a possible eight occupational levels. Thus, the child of a laborer may become an artisan or a technician, but he or she is less likely to become a manager or professional. The odds against reaching the top are extremely high unless one begins from a relatively privileged position.

Third, as the later study by Featherman and Hauser (1978) documents, occupational mobility among African Americans remains sharply limited by racial discrimination (see Chapter 9). Even when the researchers compared Black and White males who had similar levels of schooling, parental background, and early career experience, the achievement levels of Blacks were lower than those of Whites. The researchers have also noted that Blacks are more likely than Whites to be downwardly mobile and less likely to be upwardly mobile. Featherman and Hauser offer evidence of a modest decline in the significance of race; yet, we must regard this conclusion with some caution, since they did not consider households with no adult male present or individuals who were not counted in the labor force.

Research suggests that for the poor, social mobility is becoming more and more difficult to achieve. In addition to Wilson’s work on the underclass described in Box 8-1, studies by sociologist Greg Duncan (1994; Duncan and Yeung 1995) and by economist Ann Huff Stevens (1994) report that in the late 1980s, the opportunity to advance out of poverty narrowed significantly for poor people in general and especially for young women and African American children.

### **The Impact of Education**

Another conclusion of both studies is that education plays a critical role in social mobility. The impact of formal schooling on adult status is even greater than that of family background (although, as we have seen, family background influences the likelihood that one will receive higher education). Furthermore, education represents an important means of intergenerational mobility. Three-fourths of college-educated men achieved some upward mobility, compared with only

12 percent of those who received no schooling (see also J. Davis 1982).

Education’s impact on mobility has diminished somewhat in the last decade, however. An undergraduate degree—a B.A. or a B.S.—serves less as a guarantee of upward mobility than it did in the past simply because more and more entrants into the job market now hold such a degree. Moreover, intergenerational mobility is declining, since there is no longer such a stark difference between generations. In earlier decades many high school-educated parents successfully sent their children to college, but today’s college students are increasingly likely to have college-educated parents (Hout 1988).

### **The Impact of Gender**

Studies of mobility, even more than those of class, have traditionally ignored the significance of gender, but some research findings are now available that explore the relationship between gender and mobility.

Women’s employment opportunities are much more limited than men’s (as Chapter 10 will show). Moreover, according to recent research, women whose skills far exceed the jobs offered them are more likely than men to withdraw entirely from the paid labor force. This withdrawal violates an assumption common to traditional mobility studies: that most people will aspire to upward mobility and seek to make the most of their opportunities.



Ernestina Galindo has broken the mold—she runs her own tortilla factory in Austin, Texas. While entrepreneurship may still be easier for men, women often try it because they encounter resistance to advancement in larger corporations.

In contrast to men, women have a rather large range of clerical occupations open to them. But the modest salary ranges and limited prospects for advancement in many of these positions mean there is not much possibility of upward mobility. Moreover, self-employment as shopkeepers, entrepreneurs, independent professionals, and the like—an important road to upward mobility for men—is difficult for women, who find it hard to secure the necessary financing. Although sons commonly follow in the footsteps of their fathers, women are unlikely to move into their fathers' positions. Consequently, gender remains an important factor in shaping social mobility within the United States. Women in the United States (and in other parts of the world) are especially likely to be trapped in poverty and unable to rise out of their low-income status (P. Smith 1994).

In recent decades, many male workers in the United States have experienced downward mobility, including unemployment. (As we will see in Chapter 13, this has resulted in part from corporate “downsizing” and “restructuring” as well as plant closings.) For the first time since World War II, college-educated men in their late 40s and 50s—who may have assumed they were in their prime earning years—are experiencing a significant decline in wages. Some have lost high-level jobs at major corporations and have shifted (after periods of unemployment) to lower-paying positions at small companies or to self-employment.

So far in the chapter we have focused on stratification and social mobility within the United States. In the next section we broaden our focus to consider stratification from a global perspective.

### ● Stratification in the World System

Kwabena Afari is a pineapple exporter in Ghana. But for years his customers had to show a great deal of ingenuity to get in touch with him. First a call had to be placed to Accra, the capital city. Someone there would call the post office in Afari's hometown. Then the post office would send a messenger to his home. Afari has recently solved his problem by getting a cellular phone, but his longtime dilemma symbolizes the problems of the roughly 600 million people who live in sub-Saharan Africa and are being left behind by the trade and foreign investment transforming the global economy. One African entrepreneur notes, “It's not that we have been left behind. It's that we haven't even started” (Buckley 1997:8).

It is true that technology, the information highway, and innovations in telecommunications have all made the world a smaller and more unified place. Yet while the world marketplace is gradually shrinking in space and tastes, the profits of business are not being equally shared.

There remains a substantial disparity between the world's “have” and “have-not” nations. For example, in 1995, the average value of goods and services produced per citizen (per capita gross national product) in the United States, Japan, Switzerland, and Norway was more than \$25,000. By contrast, the figure was under \$200 in six poorer countries. The 140 developing nations accounted for 78 percent of the world's population but possessed only about 16 percent of all wealth (Haub and Cornelius 1999). These contrasts are illustrated in Figure 8-3. Three forces discussed below are particularly responsible for the domination of the world marketplace by a few nations: the legacy of colonialism, the advent of multinational corporations, and modernization.

### Colonialism, Neocolonialism, and World Systems Analysis

**Colonialism** is the maintenance of political, social, economic, and cultural domination over a people by a foreign power for an extended period of time (W. Bell 1981b). In simple terms, it is rule by outsiders. The long reign of the British Empire over much of North America, parts of Africa, and India is an example of colonial domination. The same can be said of French rule over Algeria, Tunisia, and other parts of North Africa. Relations between the colonial nation and colonized people are similar to those between the dominant capitalist class and the proletariat as described by Karl Marx.

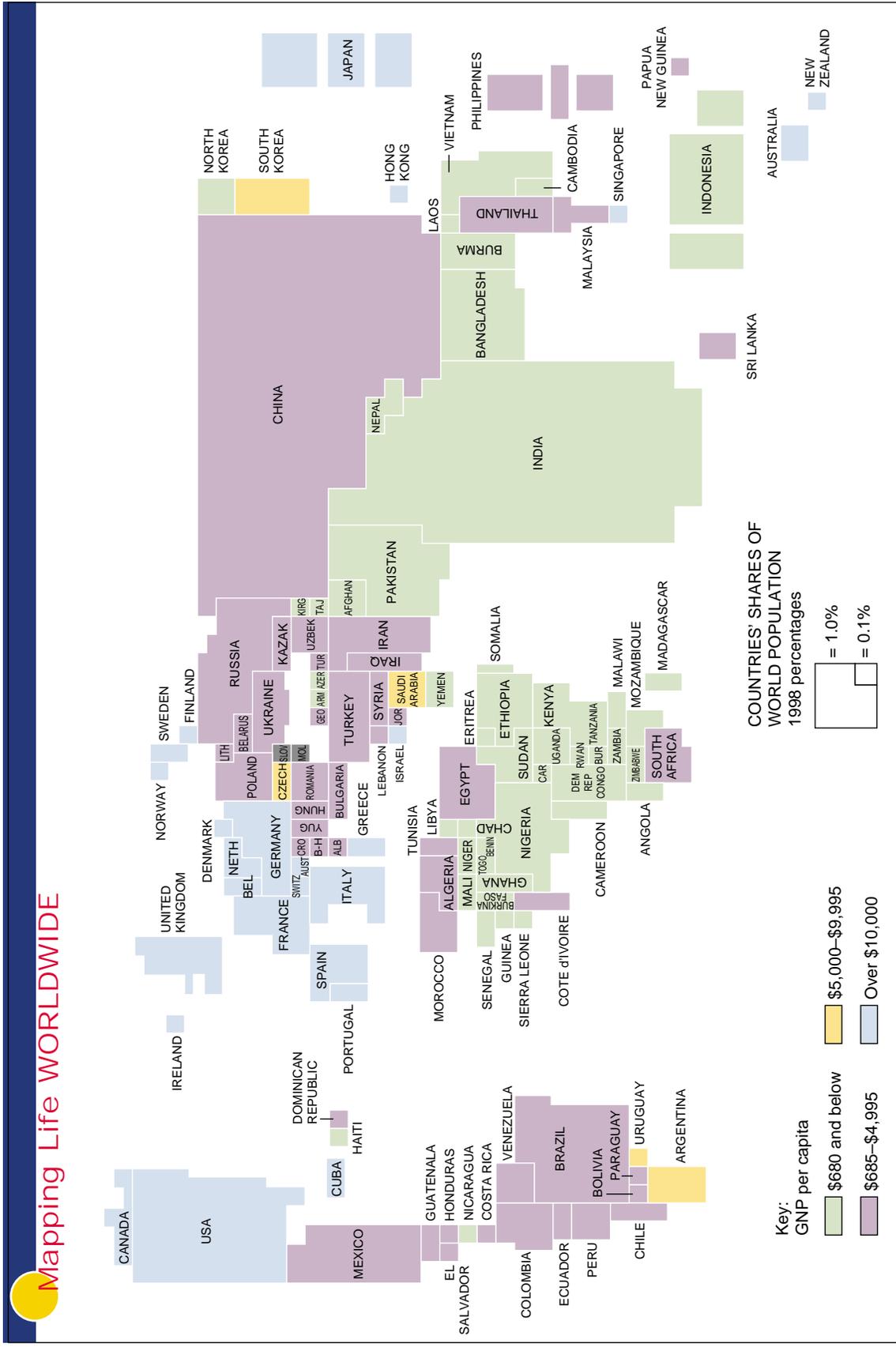
By the 1980s, colonialism had largely disappeared. Most of the world's nations that were colonies before World War I had achieved political independence and established their own governments. However, for many of these countries, the transition to genuine self-rule was not yet complete. Colonial domination had established patterns of economic exploitation that continued even after nationhood was achieved—in part because former colonies were unable to develop their own industry and technology. Their dependence on more industrialized nations, including their former colonial masters, for managerial and technical expertise, investment capital, and manufactured goods kept former colonies in a subservient position. Such continuing dependence and foreign domination constitute **neocolonialism**.

The economic and political consequences of colonialism and neocolonialism are readily apparent. Drawing on the conflict perspective, sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein (1974, 1979, 2000) views the global economic system as divided between nations that control wealth and those from which resources are taken. Neocolonialism allows industrialized societies to accumulate even more capital.

Wallerstein has advanced a **world systems analysis** to

**FIGURE 8-3**

Gross National Product per Capita, 2000



Sources: Haub and Cornelius 2000; Smith 1999:14–15.

This stylized map reflects the different sizes in population of the world's nations. The color for each country shows the 2000 estimated gross national product (the total value of goods and services produced by the nation in a given year) per capita. As the map shows, some of the world's most populous countries—such as India, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Pakistan—are among the nations with the lowest standard of living as measured by per capita gross national product.

describe the unequal economic and political relationships in which certain industrialized nations (among them the United States, Japan, and Germany) and their global corporations dominate the *core* of the system. At the *semi-periphery* of the system are countries with marginal economic status, such as Israel, Ireland, and South Korea. Wallerstein suggests that the poor developing countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America are on the *periphery* of the world economic system. Core nations and their corporations control and exploit the developing nations' economies, much as the old colonial empires ruled their colonies (Chase-Dunn and Grimes 1995).

The division between core and periphery nations is significant and remarkably stable. A study by the International Monetary Fund (2000) found little change over the course of the *last 100 years* for the 42 economies that were studied. The only changes were upward movement into the core by Japan and to lower margins of the semiperiphery by China.

Wallerstein's world systems analysis is the most widely used version of **dependency theory**. According to this theory, even as developing countries make economic advances, they remain weak and subservient to core nations and corporations within an increasingly intertwined global economy. This allows industrialized nations to continue to exploit developing countries for their own gain. In a sense, dependency theory applies the conflict perspective on a global scale.

In the view of world systems analysis and dependency theory, a growing share of the human and natural resources of developing countries is being redistributed to the core industrialized nations. In part, this is because developing countries owe huge sums of money to industrialized nations as a result of foreign aid, loans, and trade deficits. This global debt crisis has intensified the Third World dependency begun under colonialism, neocolonialism, and multinational investment. International financial institutions are pressuring indebted countries to take severe measures to meet their interest payments. The result is that developing nations may be forced to devalue their currencies, freeze workers' wages, increase privatization of industry, and reduce government services and employment.

In addition to their political and economic impact, colonialism and neocolonialism have an important cultural component. The colonized people lose their native values and begin to identify with the culture of the colonial power. People may discard or neglect their native language as they attempt to emulate their colonizers. Those opposed to contemporary neocolonialism see every consumer product, book, film, or television program exported by a core nation as an attack on the traditions and cultural autonomy of the dependent people. Even the

popularity of *Titanic* or *The X-Files* may be viewed as a threat to native cultures when such programs dominate their media at the expense of local art forms. Sembene Ousmane, one of Africa's most prominent writers and filmmakers, noted, "[Today] we are more familiar with European fairy tales than with our own traditional stories" (World Development Forum 1990:4).

## Multinational Corporations

A key role in neocolonialism today is played by worldwide corporate giants. The term **multinational corporations** refers to commercial organizations that are headquartered in one country but do business throughout the world. Such private trade and lending relationships are not new; merchants have conducted business abroad for hundreds of years, trading gems, spices, garments, and other goods. However, today's multinational giants are not merely buying and selling overseas; they are also *producing* goods all over the world, as we saw in the case of Nike (Wallerstein 1974).

Moreover, today's "global factory" (the factories throughout the developing world run by multinational corporations) now has the "global office" alongside it. Multinationals based in core countries are beginning to establish reservations services, centers to process insurance claims, and data processing centers in the periphery nations. As service industries become a more important part of the international marketplace, many companies have concluded that the low costs of overseas operations more than offset the expense of transmitting information around the world.

Do not underestimate the size of these global corporations. Table 8-3 shows that the total revenues of multinational businesses are on a par with the total value of goods and services exchanged in *entire nations*. Foreign sales represent an important source of profit for multinational corporations, a fact that encourages them to expand into other countries (in many cases, the developing nations). The economy of the United States is heavily dependent on foreign commerce, much of which is conducted by multinationals. Almost one out of five manufacturing jobs in the United States has to do with the export of goods to foreign countries (Bureau of the Census 1997a:751).

Multinational corporations can actually help the developing nations of the world. They bring jobs and industry to areas where subsistence agriculture previously served as the only means of survival. Multinationals promote rapid development through diffusion of inventions and innovations from industrial nations. Viewed from a functionalist perspective, the combination of skilled technology and management

Table 8-3 Comparing Multinational Corporations and Nations

Corporation	Revenues (\$ millions)	Comparable Nations (or City)	Gross National Product (\$ millions)
1. General Motors (USA)	\$ 176,558	Denmark	\$ 175,200
2. Wal-Mart (USA)	166,809	Norway plus Lebanon	167,000
3. Exxon-Mobil (USA)	163,881	Venezuela plus Malaysia	163,400
4. Ford Motor (USA)	162,558	Colombia plus Pakistan	162,200
5. DaimlerChrysler (Germany)	159,985	Hong Kong	158,200
11. Royal Dutch/Shell (Brit./Neth.)	105,366	Israel	96,500
16. IBM (USA)	87,548	Philippines plus Paraguay	88,100
29. Philip Morris (USA)	61,751	Pakistan	61,500
30. Sony (Japan)	60,052	Peru	60,500
41. Nestlé (Switzerland)	49,694	Algeria	46,400

Notes: Revenues are generally for 1999. GNP data are for 1998 and are based on local currencies converted to prevailing U.S. dollar equivalencies. Corporations are ranked by their placement on the *Fortune* 500 list of global corporations.

Sources: For corporate data: *Fortune* 2000. For GNP data: World Bank 2000b:9–11.

provided by multinationals and the relatively cheap labor available in developing nations is ideal for a global enterprise. Multinationals can take maximum advantage of technology while reducing costs and boosting profits.

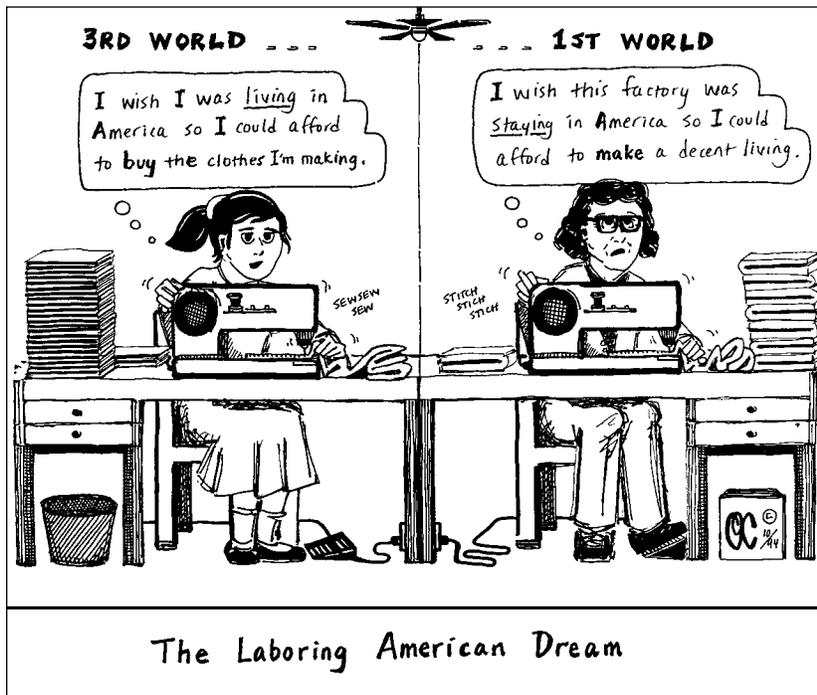
The international ties of multinational corporations also facilitate the exchange of ideas and technology around the world. They make the nations of the world more interdependent. And these ties may prevent certain disputes from reaching the point of serious conflict. A country cannot afford to sever diplomatic relations, or engage in warfare, with a nation that is the headquarters for its main business suppliers or is a key outlet for exports.

Conflict theorists challenge this favorable evaluation of the impact of multinational corporations. They emphasize that multinationals exploit local workers to maximize profits. Starbucks—the international coffee retailer based in Seattle—gets some of its coffee from farms in Guatemala. But to earn enough money to buy a pound of Starbucks' coffee, a Guatemalan farmworker would have to pick 500 pounds of beans, representing five days of work (Entine and Nichols 1996).

The pool of cheap labor in the developing world prompts multinationals to move factories out of core countries. An added bonus for the multinationals is that the developing world discourages strong trade unions. Or-

ganized labor in industrialized countries insists on decent wages and humane working conditions, but governments seeking to attract or keep multinationals may develop a "climate for investment" that includes repressive antilabor laws restricting union activity and collective bargaining. If labor's demands in factories run by multinational corporations become threatening, the firm will simply move its plant elsewhere, leaving a trail of unemployment behind. Nike, for example, moved its factories from the United States to Korea to Indonesia to Vietnam, seeking the lowest labor costs. Conflict theorists conclude that, on the whole, multinational corporations have a negative social impact on workers in both industrialized and developing nations.

Workers in the United States and other core countries are beginning to recognize that their own interests are served by helping to organize workers in developing nations. As long as multinationals can exploit cheap labor abroad, they will be in a strong position to reduce wages and benefits in industrialized countries. With this in mind, in the 1990s, labor unions, religious organizations, campus groups, and other activists mounted public campaigns to pressure companies such as Nike, Starbucks, Reebok, the Gap, and Wal-Mart to improve the wages and working conditions in their overseas operations (Cavanagh and Broad 1996).



The Laboring American Dream

Several sociologists who have surveyed the effects of foreign investment conclude that, although it may initially contribute to a host nation's wealth, it eventually increases economic inequality within developing nations. This is true in both income and ownership of land. The upper and middle classes benefit most from economic expansion, while the lower classes are less likely to benefit. Multinationals invest in limited areas of an economy and in restricted regions of a nation. Although certain sectors of the host nation's economy expand, such as hotels and expensive restaurants, this very expansion appears to retard growth in agriculture and other economic sectors. Moreover, multinational corporations often buy out or force out local entrepreneurs and companies, thereby increasing economic and cultural dependence (Bornschiefer et al. 1978; Chase-Dunn and Grimes 1995; P. Evans 1979; Wallerstein 1979).

### Modernization

Millions of people around the world are witnessing a revolutionary transformation of their day-to-day life. Contemporary social scientists use the term **modernization** to describe the far-reaching process by which peripheral nations move from traditional or less developed institutions to those characteristic of more developed societies.

Wendell Bell (1981a), whose definition of modernization we are using, notes that modern societies tend to be urban, literate, and industrial. They have sophisticated

transportation and media systems. Families tend to be organized within the nuclear family unit rather than the extended-family model (see Chapter 11). Members of societies that have undergone modernization shift allegiance from such traditional sources of authority as parents and priests to newer authorities such as government officials.

Many sociologists are quick to note that terms such as *modernization* and even *development* contain an ethnocentric bias. The unstated assumptions behind these terms are that "they" (people living in developing countries) are struggling to become more like "us" (in the core industrialized nations). Viewed from a conflict perspective, these terms perpetuate the dominant ideology of capitalist societies.

There is similar criticism of **modernization theory**, a functionalist approach proposing that modernization

and development will gradually improve the lives of people in developing nations. According to this theory, while countries develop at uneven rates, development in peripheral countries will be assisted by the innovations transferred from the industrialized world. Critics of modernization theory, including dependency theorists, counter that any such technology transfer only increases the dominance of core nations over developing countries and facilitates further exploitation.

When we see all the Coca-Cola and IBM signs going up in developing countries, it is easy to assume that economic change is also affecting cultural change. But that is not always the case, researchers note. Distinctive cultural traditions, such as a particular religious orientation or a nationalistic identity, often persist in a developing nation and can soften the impact of modernization (Inglehart and Baker 2000). Some contemporary sociologists emphasize that both industrialized and developing countries are "modern." Current researchers are increasingly viewing modernization as movement along a series of social indicators—among them degree of urbanization, energy use, literacy, political democracy, and use of birth control. Clearly, these are often subjective indicators; even in industrialized nations, not everyone would agree that wider use of birth control represents an example of "progress" (Armer and Katsillis 1992; Hedley 1992).

Current modernization studies generally take a convergence perspective. Using the indicators noted above, researchers focus on how societies are moving closer together despite traditional differences. Initially, such modernization

studies emphasized the convergence between the United States and the (former) Soviet Union or between capitalist North America and the socialist democracies of western Europe. Now, however, this convergence perspective increasingly includes the developing countries of the Third World. Researchers recognize the interdependence of core industrialized nations and the developing world—as well as the continuing exploitation of the latter countries by the former. From a conflict perspective, modernization in developing countries often perpetuates their dependence on and continued exploitation by more industrialized nations. Conflict theorists view such a continuing dependence on foreign powers as an example of contemporary neocolonialism (Adelman 1993; C. Kerr 1960; O'Donnell 1992).

### Stratification within Nations: A Comparative Perspective

At the same time that the gap between rich and poor nations is widening, so too is the gap between rich and poor citizens *within* nations. As discussed earlier, stratification in developing nations is closely related to their relatively

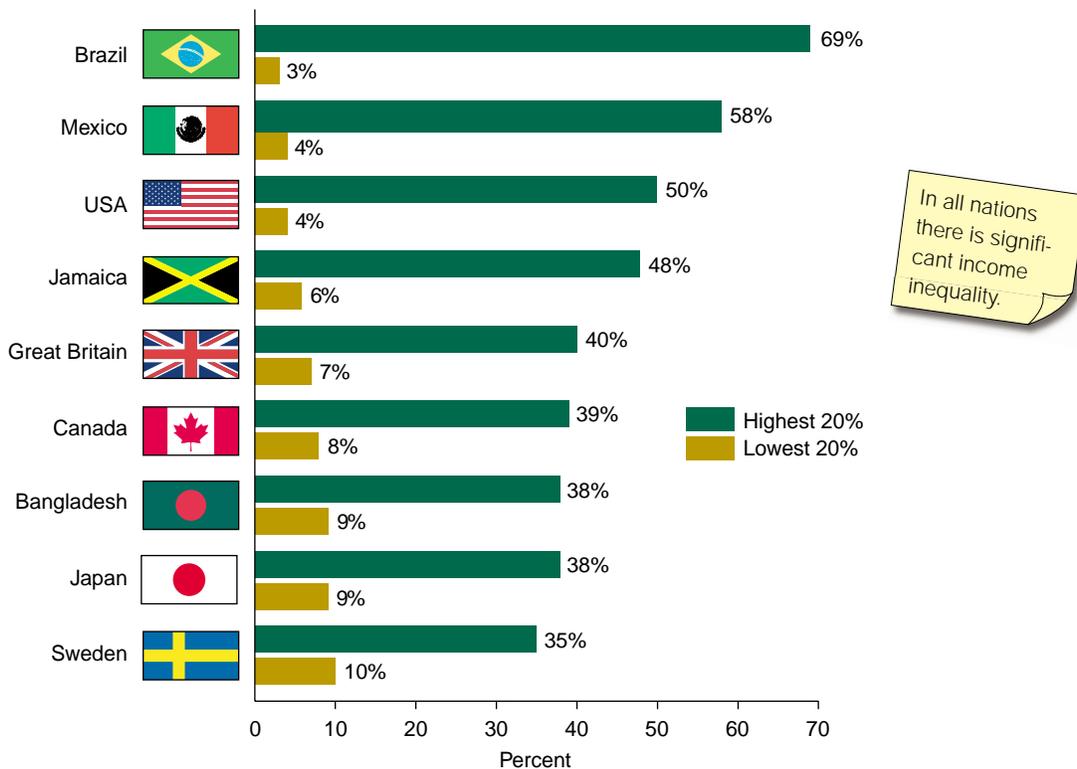
weak and dependent position in the global economy. Local elites work hand in hand with multinational corporations and prosper from such alliances. At the same time, the economic system with its prevailing developmental values creates and perpetuates the exploitation of industrial and agricultural workers. That's why foreign investment in developing countries tends to increase economic inequality (Bornschiefer et al. 1978; Kerbo 2000). As Box 8-3 makes clear, inequality within a society is also evident in industrialized nations such as Japan.

In at least 15 nations around the world, the most affluent 10 percent of the population receives at least 40 percent of all income: Brazil (the leader at 48 percent), Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Lesotho, Mali, Mexico, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Portugal, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Zimbabwe (World Bank 2000a:238–239). Figure 8-4 compares the distribution of income in selected industrialized and developing nations.

The decade of the 1980s was particularly cruel for many developing countries. Some nations—including Zambia, Bolivia, and Nigeria—saw per capita income plummet as dramatically as it did in the United States

**FIGURE 8-4**

#### Distribution of Income in Nine Nations



Note: Data are considered comparable although based on statistics covering 1986 to 1999.

Sources: World Bank 1997a:54–56; 2000a:238–239. U.S. data from the Congressional Budget Office cited in Shapiro and Greenstein 1999.

A tourist visiting Japan may at first experience a bit of culture shock after noticing the degree to which everything in Japanese life is ranked: corporations, universities, even educational programs. These rankings are widely reported and accepted. Moreover, the ratings shape day-to-day social interactions: Japanese find it difficult to sit, talk, or eat together unless the relative rankings of those present have been established, often through the practice of *meishi* (the exchange of business cards).

The apparent preoccupation with ranking and formality suggests an exceptional degree of stratification. Yet researchers have determined that Japan's level of income inequality is among the *lowest* of major industrial societies (see Figure 8-4 on page 212). Whereas the pay gap between Japan's top corporate executives and the nation's lowest-paid workers is about 8 to 1, the comparable figure for the United States would be 37 to 1. In addition, Japanese law prohibits the lucrative stock options received by top U.S. executives.

This relative level of income equality in Japanese society dates back to post-World War II economic changes, including extensive land reform and the breakup of powerful holding companies. A lower level of inequality was helped along by an expanding economy combined with a labor shortage. However, during the 1990s the gap between rich and poor began to grow as a result of a severe economic recession and tax laws that let the rich hold on to more of their money.

Despite the relatively low level of *income* inequality in Japan, there are various other forms of inequality evident in Japanese society. For example, even though Japan is rather homogeneous—certainly when compared with the United States—in terms of race, ethnicity, nationality, and language, there is discrimination against the nation's Chinese and Korean minorities, and the *Burakumin* constitute a low-status subculture who encounter extensive prejudice.

Perhaps the most pervasive form of inequality in Japan today is gender discrimination. Japanese girls do not re-

Even in developing countries, women are twice as likely to be managers as in Japan.

ceive the same encouragement to achieve in education that boys do. It should be no surprise, then, that Japanese women occupy a subordinate position in higher education. Whereas 80 percent of the nation's male college students are in four-year universities, two-thirds of female students are in women's junior colleges that promote traditional domestic roles for women. Even when Japanese women enter four-year universities, they often major in home economics, nutrition, or literature.

Overall, women earn only about 64 percent of men's wages. Fewer than 10 percent of Japanese managers are fe-

male—a ratio that is one of the lowest in the world. Even in developing countries, women are twice as likely to be managers as in Japan.

In 1985, Japan's parliament—at the time, 97 percent male—passed an Equal Employment bill that encourages employers to end sex discrimination in hiring, assignment, and promotion policies. However, feminist organizations were dissatisfied because the law lacked strong sanctions. In a landmark ruling issued in late 1996, a Japanese court for the first time held an employer liable for denying promotions due to sex discrimination. The court ordered a Japanese bank to pay 12 female employees a total of almost \$1 million and added that 11 of the women must immediately be promoted to management posts.

On the political front, Japanese women have made progress but remain underrepresented. In a study of women in government around the world, the Inter-Parliamentary Union found that, as of 1999, Japan ranked near the bottom of the countries studied, with less than 5 percent of its national legislators female.

### Let's Discuss

1. What factors contribute to the relatively low level of income inequality in Japan?
2. Describe the types of gender discrimination found in Japan. Why do you think Japanese women occupy such a subordinate social position?

Sources: Abegglen and Stalk 1985; French 2000; Inter-Parliamentary Union 1999; Jordan 1996; Kerbo 1996; Kristof 1995; Magnier 1999; Nakane 1970; Sterngold 1992; Strom 2000b.

during the Great Depression of the 1930s. With these trends in mind, researcher Alan Durning (1990:26) observed that the term “developing nation” has become a cruel misnomer: Many of the world's less affluent nations are disintegrating rather than developing.

Women in developing countries find life especially dif-

icult. Karuna Chanana Ahmed, an anthropologist from India who has studied women in developing nations, calls women the most exploited among oppressed people. Women face sex discrimination beginning at birth. They are commonly fed less than male children, are denied educational opportunities, and are often hospitalized only when

critically ill. Whether inside or outside the home, women's work is devalued. When economies fail, as they did in Asian countries in the late 1990s, women are the first to be laid off from work (J. Anderson and Moore 1993; Kristof 1998).

Surveys show a significant degree of *female infanticide* (the killing of baby girls) in China and rural areas of India. Only one-third of Pakistan's sexually segregated schools are for women, and one-third of these schools have no buildings. In Kenya and Tanzania, it is illegal for a woman to own a house. In Saudi Arabia, women are prohibited from driving, walking alone in public, and socializing with men outside their families (C. Murphy 1993). We will explore women's second-class status throughout the world more fully in Chapter 10.

What factors have contributed to the recent difficulties of developing nations? Certainly runaway population growth has hurt the standard of living of many Third World peoples. So, too, has the accelerating environmental decline evident in the quality of air, water, and other natural resources. (We will examine population growth and environmental decline in more detail in Chapters 14 and

15.) Still another factor has been the developing nations' collective debt of \$1.3 trillion. If we add to a nation's debt repayment the estimates of money being invested elsewhere by its wealthy citizens, the annual outflow of funds may reach \$100 billion (Durning 1990; Kerbo 2000).

Unfortunately, the massive exodus of money from poorer regions of the world only intensifies their destruction of natural resources. From a conflict view, less affluent nations are being forced to exploit their mineral deposits, forests, and fisheries to meet their debt obligations while offering only subsistence labor to local workers. The poor turn to the only means of survival available to them: marginal lands. They plow mountain slopes, burn plots in tropical forests, and overgraze grasslands—often knowing that their actions are destructive to the environment. But they see no alternative in their agonizing fight for simple survival (Durning 1990; Waring 1988).

Survival is at the heart of an important social policy issue, welfare—how to provide for the basic needs of the world's poorest, a topic we turn to now in the social policy section.

## SOCIAL POLICY AND STRATIFICATION

# Rethinking Welfare in North America and Europe



### The Issue

- After five years on public assistance, Claudia Melgosa of Glendale, California, is a welfare success story. The 28-year-old mother of two has landed a job at a storage company and moved up to a \$9-an-hour customer service position. However, Carlos Sabala of nearby Santa Monica works in a hotel for \$7.18 per hour and worries about being edged back into unemployment by the stiff competition for low-wage jobs (Ellis and Ellingwood 1998).
- Helene Desegrais, a single mother in Paris, France, waited for four months to obtain a place in government-subsidized day care for her daughter. Now she can seek a full-time job, but she is concerned about government threats to curtail such services to keep taxes down (Simons 1997).
- Marcia Missouri of Worcester, Massachusetts, tacks up a handwritten advertisement in the public housing project in which she lives to say that she is available to clean yards and braid hair for a few extra dollars. The sign lists a friend's phone number; she doesn't have a phone of her own (Vobejda and Havenmann 1997).

These are the faces of people living on the edge—often women with children seeking to make a go of it amidst changing social policies. Governments in all parts of the world are searching for the right solution to welfare: How much subsidy should they provide? How much responsibility should fall on the shoulders of the poor?

### The Setting

By the 1990s, there was intense debate in the United States over the issue of welfare. Welfare programs were costly, and there was widespread concern (however unfounded) that welfare payments discouraged recipients from seeking jobs. Both Democrats and Republicans vowed to “end welfare as we know it” (Pear 1996:20).

In late 1996, in a historic shift in federal policy, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act was passed, ending the long-standing federal guarantee of assistance to every poor family that meets eligibility requirements. It set a lifetime limit of five years of welfare benefits for recipients and required that all able-bodied adults work after two years of benefits (although hardship exceptions are allowed). The federal government would give block grants to the states to use as they wish in assisting poor and

needy residents, and it would permit states to experiment with ways to move people off welfare (R. Wolf 1996). In 1997, the Clinton administration created the “Welfare to Work Partnership,” a nonprofit group intended to encourage businesses to hire welfare recipients.

Other countries vary widely in their commitment to social service programs. But most industrialized nations devote higher proportions of their expenditures to housing, social security, welfare, and unemployment compensation than the United States does. In Switzerland in 1997, 71 percent of central-government spending went to these social service areas; in Ireland, 60 percent; while in the United States the figure stood at 54 percent. In good part, this is because the United States has such a comparatively high level of military spending. A study by sociologist Greg Duncan (1994) of welfare programs in the United States and seven European nations found that a higher proportion of the poor escape poverty in Europe than in the United States. Apparently, the greater benefits facilitate upward mobility (World Bank 2000a:256–257).

### Sociological Insights

Many sociologists tend to view the debate over welfare throughout industrialized nations from a conflict perspective: the “haves” in positions of policymaking listen to the interests of other “haves,” while the cries of the “have-nots” are drowned out. Critics of so-called welfare reform believe that the nation’s economic problems are unfairly being blamed on welfare spending and the poor. From a conflict perspective, this backlash against welfare recipients reflects deep fears and hostility toward the nation’s urban and predominantly African American and Hispanic underclass.

Those critical of the backlash note that “welfare scapegoating” conveniently ignores the lucrative federal handouts that go to *affluent* individuals and families. For example, while federal housing aid to the poor was being cut drastically in the 1980s, the amount of tax deductions for mortgage interest and property taxes more than doubled. The National Association of Home Builders, an ardent defender of the



Many U.S. corporations benefit from tax breaks and direct payments by the government, just as much a form of welfare as that given the poorest of residents.

mortgage-interest deduction, estimates that it costs the federal government \$60 billion a year in lost taxes. This deduction generally benefits affluent taxpayers who own their own homes. According to one study, more than 44 percent of the benefits from this tax break go to the 5 percent of taxpayers with the highest incomes, who together save themselves \$22 billion annually (Goodgame 1993; Johnston 1996).

Those who take a conflict perspective also urge policymakers and the general public to look closely at *corporate welfare*, the tax breaks, direct payments, and grants that the government makes to corporations, rather than focus on the comparatively small allowances being given to welfare mothers and their children. According to a 1998 estimate by the public-interest group Essential Information, these breaks to corporations cost U.S. taxpayers more than \$125 billion, while programs to assist the poor cost \$75 billion. But any suggestion to curtail such “corporate welfare” brings a strong response from special-interest groups much more powerful than any coalition on behalf of the poor (Lilliston 1994; Barlett and Steele 1998).

### Policy Initiatives

As of late 1999, three years after the law changed the welfare system, 7.5 million people had left welfare, reducing the welfare rolls to 6.6 million. The Welfare to Work Partnership had found some 650,000 jobs in 12,000 companies that joined the partnership by the beginning of 2000. Remarkably, the former welfare recipients in these businesses

were less likely to leave their jobs than were other employees. The low turnover helps offset the costs of training (Department of Health and Human Services 2000; Welfare to Work Partnership 2000).

The government likes to highlight success stories such as that of Claudia Melgosa (described at the beginning of this section). It is true that people who previously depended on tax dollars are now working and paying taxes themselves. But skeptics say that it is much too soon to see if “workfare” will be successful. They point to the new jobs being generated during a booming economy as an unrealistic test of the system. Furthermore, the hard-core jobless, those people harder to train or people encumbered by drug or alcohol abuse, physical disabilities, or child care needs, are not going to subsist easily even in a successful economy. A 1999 survey showed that the biggest needs of welfare-to-work employees were child care and transportation—services rarely provided by employers. At the same time that suggestions mount to provide such services for former welfare recipients, the working poor, like Carlos Sabala above, complain that “we get nothing” (Fuller and Kagan 2000; Welfare to Work Partnership 2000).

European governments have encountered many of the same citizen demands as found in North America: Keep our taxes low, even if it means reducing services to the poor. However, nations in eastern and central Europe have faced a special challenge since the end of communism. The governments in those nations had traditionally provided an impressive array of social services, but they differed from capitalist systems in several important respects. First, the communist system was premised on full employment, so there was no

need to provide unemployment insurance; social services focused on the old and the disabled. Second, subsidies, such as for housing and even utilities, played an important role. With new competition from the West and tight budgets, some of these countries (as well as Sweden, despite its long history of social welfare programs) are beginning to realize that a system of universal coverage is no longer affordable and must be replaced by more targeted programs. Some of these countries’ residents have sought refuge in western Europe, putting new demands on social service systems there just as people are calling for a moratorium on higher taxes (World Bank 1997a:55–57; Kuptsch and Mazie 1999).

Both in North America and Europe, people are beginning to turn to private means to support themselves. For instance, they are investing money for their later years rather than depending on government social security programs. But that solution only works if you have a job and can save money. Increasing proportions of people are seeing the gap between themselves and the affluent growing with fewer government programs aimed to assist them. Solutions are frequently left to the private sector, while government policy initiatives at the national level all but disappear.

### Let’s Discuss

1. How does the level of spending for social services in the United States compare with that of European countries? What accounts for the differences?
2. Do you think welfare recipients should be required to work? What kind of support should they be given?
3. Has the welfare system that went into effect in the United States in 1996 been successful? Why or why not?

## Chapter Resources

### Summary

**Stratification** is the structured ranking of entire groups of people that perpetuates unequal economic rewards and power in a society. In this chapter, we examine three general systems of stratification, the explanations offered by functionalist and conflict theorists for the existence of social inequality, the relationship between stratification and social mobility, and stratification within the world system as well as within nations.

1. Some degree of **social inequality** characterizes all cultures.
2. Systems of **stratification** include **slavery**, **castes**, and social **class**.
3. Karl Marx saw that differences in access to the means of production created social, economic, and political inequality and distinct classes of owners and laborers.
4. Max Weber identified three analytically distinct components of stratification: **class**, **status**, and **power**.
5. Functionalists argue that stratification is necessary so that people will be motivated to fill society's important positions; conflict theorists see stratification as a major source of societal tension and conflict.
6. One consequence of social class in the United States is that both **wealth** and **income** are distributed unevenly.
7. The category of the "poor" defies any simple definition and counters common stereotypes about "poor people." The long-term poor who lack training and skills form an **underclass**.
8. One's **life chances**—opportunities for obtaining material goods, positive living conditions, and favorable life experiences—are related to one's social class. Occupying a higher social position improves a person's life chances.
9. **Social mobility** is more likely to be found in an **open system** that emphasizes achieved status than in a **closed system** that focuses on ascribed characteristics. Race, gender, and family background are important factors in mobility.
10. Formerly colonized nations are kept in a subservient position, subject to foreign domination, through the process of **neocolonialism**.
11. Drawing on the conflict perspective, the world systems analysis of sociologist immanuel Wallerstein views the global economic system as divided between nations that control wealth (**core nations**) and those from which capital is taken (**periphery nations**).
12. According to **dependency theory**, even as developing countries make economic advances, they remain weak and subservient to core nations and corporations within an increasingly intertwined global economy.
13. **Multinational corporations** bring jobs and industry to developing nations, but they also tend to exploit the workers there in order to maximize profits.
14. According to **modernization theory**, development in peripheral countries will be assisted by the innovations transferred from the industrialized world.
15. Social mobility is more limited in developing nations than in the core nations.
16. Many governments are struggling with how much of their tax dollars to spend on welfare programs. The trend in the United States is to put welfare recipients to work.

### Critical Thinking Questions

1. Sociologist Daniel Rossides has conceptualized the class system of the United States using a five-class model. According to Rossides, the upper-middle class and the lower-middle class together account for about 40 percent of the nation's population. Yet studies suggest that a higher proportion of respondents identify themselves as "middle class." Drawing on the model presented by Rossides, suggest why members of both the upper class and the working class might prefer to identify themselves as "middle class."
2. Sociological study of stratification generally is conducted at the macro level and draws most heavily on the functionalist and conflict perspectives. How might sociologists use the **interactionist** perspective to examine social class inequalities within a college community?
3. Imagine that you have opportunity to spend a year in a developing country studying inequality in that nation. How would you draw on the research designs of sociology (surveys, observation, experiments, existing sources) to better understand and document stratification in this developing country?

## Key Terms

- Absolute poverty** A standard of poverty based on a minimum level of subsistence below which families should not be expected to live. (page 198)
- Achieved status** A social position attained by a person largely through his or her own efforts. (190)
- Ascribed status** A social position “assigned” to a person by society without regard for the person’s unique talents or characteristics. (190)
- Bourgeoisie** Karl Marx’s term for the capitalist class, comprising the owners of the means of production. (193)
- Capitalism** An economic system in which the means of production are largely in private hands and the main incentive for economic activity is the accumulation of profits. (193)
- Castes** Hereditary systems of rank, usually religiously dictated, that tend to be fixed and immobile. (191)
- Class** A group of people who have a similar level of wealth and income. (193)
- Class consciousness** In Karl Marx’s view, a subjective awareness held by members of a class regarding their common vested interests and need for collective political action to bring about social change. (193)
- Class system** A social ranking based primarily on economic position in which achieved characteristics can influence social mobility. (191)
- Closed system** A social system in which there is little or no possibility of individual mobility. (205)
- Colonialism** The maintenance of political, social, economic, and cultural dominance over a people by a foreign power for an extended period of time. (207)
- Dependency theory** An approach that contends that industrialized nations continue to exploit developing countries for their own gain. (209)
- Dominant ideology** A set of cultural beliefs and practices that helps to maintain powerful social, economic, and political interests. (195)
- Esteem** The reputation that a particular individual has earned within an occupation. (196)
- False consciousness** A term used by Karl Marx to describe an attitude held by members of a class that does not accurately reflect their objective position. (193)
- Horizontal mobility** The movement of an individual from one social position to another of the same rank. (205)
- Income** Salaries and wages. (190)
- Intergenerational mobility** Changes in the social position of children relative to their parents. (205)
- Intragenerational mobility** Changes in a person’s social position within his or her adult life. (205)
- Life chances** People’s opportunities to provide themselves with material goods, positive living conditions, and favorable life experiences. (202)
- Modernization** The far-reaching process by which peripheral nations move from traditional or less developed institutions to those characteristic of more developed societies. (211)
- Modernization theory** A functionalist approach that proposes that modernization and development will gradually improve the lives of people in peripheral nations. (211)
- Multinational corporations** Commercial organizations that, while headquartered in one country, own or control other corporations and subsidiaries throughout the world. (209)
- Neocolonialism** Continuing dependence of former colonies on foreign countries. (207)
- Objective method** A technique for measuring social class that assigns individuals to classes on the basis of criteria such as occupation, education, income, and place of residence. (196)
- Open system** A social system in which the position of each individual is influenced by his or her achieved status. (205)
- Power** The ability to exercise one’s will over others. (193)
- Prestige** The respect and admiration that an occupation holds in a society. (196)
- Proletariat** Karl Marx’s term for the working class in a capitalist society. (193)
- Relative poverty** A floating standard of deprivation by which people at the bottom of a society, whatever their lifestyles, are judged to be disadvantaged in comparison with the nation as a whole. (199)
- Slavery** A system of enforced servitude in which people are legally owned by others and in which enslaved status is transferred from parents to children. (190)
- Social inequality** A condition in which members of a society have different amounts of wealth, prestige, or power. (189)
- Social mobility** Movement of individuals or groups from one position of a society’s stratification system to another. (205)
- Status group** People who have the same prestige or lifestyle, independent of their class positions. (193)
- Stratification** A structured ranking of entire groups of people that perpetuates unequal economic rewards and power in a society. (189)

**Underclass** Long-term poor people who lack training and skills. (200)

**Vertical mobility** The movement of a person from one social position to another of a different rank. (205)

**Wealth** An inclusive term encompassing all of a person's material assets, including land and other types of property. (190)

**World systems analysis** A view of the global economic system as divided between certain industrialized nations that control wealth and developing countries that are controlled and exploited. (207)

## Additional Readings

---

Bluestone, Barry, and Bennett Harrison. 1999. *Growing Prosperity: The Battle for Growth with Equity in the 21st Century*. Boston: Harrison Century Foundation/Houghton Mifflin. A critical look at the impact of the red-hot U.S. economy on the entire population.

Bonacich, Edna, and Richard Appelbaum. 2000. *Behind the Label: Inequality in the Los Angeles Apparel Industry*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Examines the new wave of sweatshops that has made Los Angeles the largest center of clothing production in the United States.

Nibert, David. 2000. *Hitting the Lottery Jackpot: Government and the Taxing of Dreams*. New York: Monthly Review Press. A careful analysis of the social implication of state-run lotteries, how the revenue is spent, and who tends to benefit from this multibillion dollar industry.

The World Bank. *World Development Report*. New York: Oxford University Press. Published annually by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the United Nations agency more commonly referred to as the World Bank), this volume provides a vast array of social and economic indicators regarding world development.

## Technology Resources



### Internet Connection

*Note: While all the URLs listed were current as of the printing of this book, these sites often change. Please check our website (<http://www.mhhe.com/schaefer4>) for updates.*

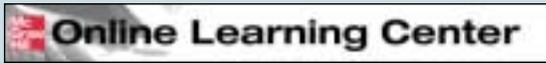
1. This chapter discusses how government agencies and private organizations attempt to alleviate both the causes and consequences of poverty. Streetwise™ (<http://www.streetwise.org>) and StreetVoice (<http://www.streetvoice.org/home.html>) are two publications/organizations trying to help end homelessness. Explore their webpages to learn more. For each publication, where appropriate, answer the following:
  - (a) When and where did the publication start? Who founded it? Why was it established?
  - (b) What are the main goals of the publication and/or organization?
  - (c) What are some of the important achievements of the newspaper or magazine?
  - (d) In what ways does the production, distribution, and sale of these publications help homeless persons individually and the cause of alleviating homelessness in general?
  - (e) What myths about street newspapers and the homeless do the sites dispell?
  - (f) What kinds of issues and topics are covered in the publications?
  - (g) What are the goals of the “Streetwise Work Empowerment Center”?
  - (h) If you were assigned to write a newspaper article about homelessness or poverty, what would be your focus? Why?
2. Slavery is still a reality in many parts of the world. To learn more about this ever-present manifestation of stratification, visit The American Anti-Slavery Group, Inc. website (<http://www.anti-slavery.org>). Explore the photographs, readings, and statistics provided.
  - (a) What are the goals of The American Anti-Slavery Group, Inc.? When and why did it form?
  - (b) What are some of the organization’s contributions and achievements to human freedom?
  - (c) What themes and images do the pictures display?
- (d) In what parts of the world is slavery still an active institution? What social, historical, and economic forces play a part in keeping human bondage a reality there? What forms does modern slavery take?
- (e) Practice *Verstehen* and imagine what daily life is like for a modern slave. What methods do enslavers use to obtain forced labor? What kinds of work are slaves forced to do? What kinds of food (and how little) are eaten? Where and under what conditions do slaves live and sleep? What impact does slavery have on family relationships?
- (f) Do you believe that the United Nations and individual countries are doing enough to end modern slavery? Why or why not?
- (g) What are some of the latest news stories offered on the site?
- (h) What impact has the chapter and the website’s discussion of modern slavery had on your view on this form of human suffering? Were you surprised to learn that slavery still exists? What new facts did you learn?
3. One of the main themes of the chapter is that social class has real consequences for people’s health, work, family life, and opportunities. This can be seen most vividly in the true story of the sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912. Visit the following online resources to learn more about the connection between social class and the “Ship of Dreams”: Eric Klocko and Zero Z. Batzell Dean’s Children on the *Titanic: Tragedy and Class* (<http://www.ume.maine.edu/~mmedia/mdmhty/essays/titanic/titanic.html>) and the *Titanic* site designed by Jason Hildreth (<http://bannerministry.com/titanic/titanic.html>).
  - (a) After exploring the Children on the *Titanic* site, report on the specific ways that social class affected the design of the *Titanic*, the passengers’ “Reasons for Travel,” the policies set during its sinking, and the survival rate of passengers.
  - (b) About how much did a first class ticket cost? A third class ticket?
  - (c) Take the “Virtual Voyage” on Jason Hildreth’s site. How was life on (and off) the boat different for people in different classes?

- (d) After reflecting on the images on both sites, how would you describe the rooms and accommodations for first class passengers versus second and third class?
- (e) In what ways does the story of the *Titanic* support Karl Marx's view of class differentiation?
- (f) Do you believe that the order of "women and children first" would be given or followed today? Why or why not?
- (g) Do you think that the recent societal, government, and media reactions to the deaths of Princess Diana and John F. Kennedy, Jr., reinforce the conception that wealthy/famous people are seen as more important than others? Why or why not?



## Interactive e-Source with Making the Grade

---



[www.mhhe.com/schaefer4](http://www.mhhe.com/schaefer4)

---



## PowerWeb

---



## SocCity

---