



American Class System (1865-1900)

Social class is a grouping based on similar social factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation. These factors affect how much power and prestige a person has. The U. S is the most highly stratified society in the industrialized world. Class distinctions in America operate in virtually every aspect of Americans lives, determining the nature of their work, the quality of their schooling, and even the health and safety of their citizens. The number of years a person spends in school, plus the prestige of his or her occupation, plus the amount of money he or she accumulates over time, determines one's social class. Still, there is a surprising amount of disagreement among sociologists on the number of social classes in the U.S. and even on how to measure social class membership.

Measuring Social Class

Social class can be measured either *objectively* or *subjectively*. Namely the objective method classifies people according to their socioeconomic status (SES) (i.e. occupation, education, or income). While, people themselves chose their *stratum* in the subjective method. Most sociologists, however, favor the former measures in the stratification of U.S society due to the imprecision of the latter. Yet, even with these objective measures there is disagreement between functionalist theorists and conflict theorists on which objective measures to use. Functionalist sociologists rely on measures of (SES) to determine someone's social class. Whereas, conflict sociologists' classification tend for ownership of the means of production and other dynamics of the workplace.

The American Class Structure

Over the decades, sociologists have outlined as many as six or seven social classes based on SES, lifestyle, the schools people's children attend, a family's reputation in the community, how "old" or "new" people's wealth is, and so forth

Social Class	Membership	Money	Education	Occupation
<i>Upper-upper Class</i>	<i>Wealthy, powerful, & influential Families.</i>	Old money	Expensive private schools	Serve on the boards of museums, corporations, and major charities
<i>Lower-upper Class</i>	<i>The working rich</i>	New money		Government officials, large business owners, or top executives
<i>Upper-middle Class</i>	<i>Educational background and an average income</i>	Salary	College, most-post graduate or professional	Bankers, lawyers, engineers, corporate managers, or financial



			degrees	advisers
Lower-middle Class			College degrees, 2-year degrees or a high school degree	White-collar jobs: nurses, teachers
The Working class	<i>Less educational background & low income</i>	Wages	Do not have 4-year college degrees	Blue collar jobs: factory work, construction,...ect Less skilled clerical positions
The Working Poor			Lack high school degrees	Semiskilled or unskilled jobs: janitors, house cleaners, migrant laborers,

Nevertheless, in an open system of social stratification (i.e. the system by which society ranks categories of people in a hierarchy), like in the U.S, status is achieved through merit or effort, and social mobility between classes is possible through education and certain opportunities. or getting a divorce.

Social Mobility

By definition, social mobility refer to the degree to which, in a given society, an individual's, families, or group's social status can change throughout the course of their life through a system of social hierarchy or stratification. Individuals can experience:

- 1. Upward social mobility:** an increase or upward shift in social class by gaining fame, getting rich, earning a college degree, getting a job promotion, or marrying someone with a good income.
- 2. Downward social mobility:** lowering one's social class through business setbacks, unemployment, or illness, dropping out of school, losing a job, or getting divorce.
- 3. Structural mobility:** societal changes that enable a whole group of people to move up or down the social class ladder.

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