

Chapter 8

Social Class and Social Stratification

Social Differentiation

- The process by which different statuses develop in any group, organization, or society.
 - In a sports organization, players, owners, managers, fans, cheerleaders, and sponsors all have a different status within the organization.

Social Stratification

- A relatively fixed, hierarchical arrangement in society by which groups have different access to resources, power, and perceived social worth.
- In a sports organization:
 - Owners control the resources of the teams.
 - Players earn high salaries, yet do not control the team resources.
 - Sponsors provide the resources.
 - Fans provide revenue.

Inequality in the United States

- Nearly 1 in 6 children in the U.S. live poverty:
 - 34% of African American children
 - 30% of Hispanic children
 - 10% of White children
 - 13% of Asian American children

Inequality in the United States

- The rate of poverty among people in the United States has been steadily increasing since 2000.
- Among women heading their own households, 31% live below the poverty line.
- 1% of the U.S. population controls 33% of the total wealth in the nation; the bottom 20% owe more than they own.
- The average CEO of a major company has a salary of \$13.1 million dollars per year.
- Workers earning the minimum wage make \$10,712 per year if they work 40 hours a week for 52 weeks and hold only one job,

Types of Stratification Systems

- **Estate** - Elite owns property and has control over resources.
- **Caste** - rigid hierarchy of classes.
- **Class** - status is partially achieved, there is some potential for movement between classes.

Social Class

- Social class differences make it seem as if some people are practically living in two different societies.
- Social class influences many opportunities and practices in society, including the leisure that different groups experience.

Defining Class

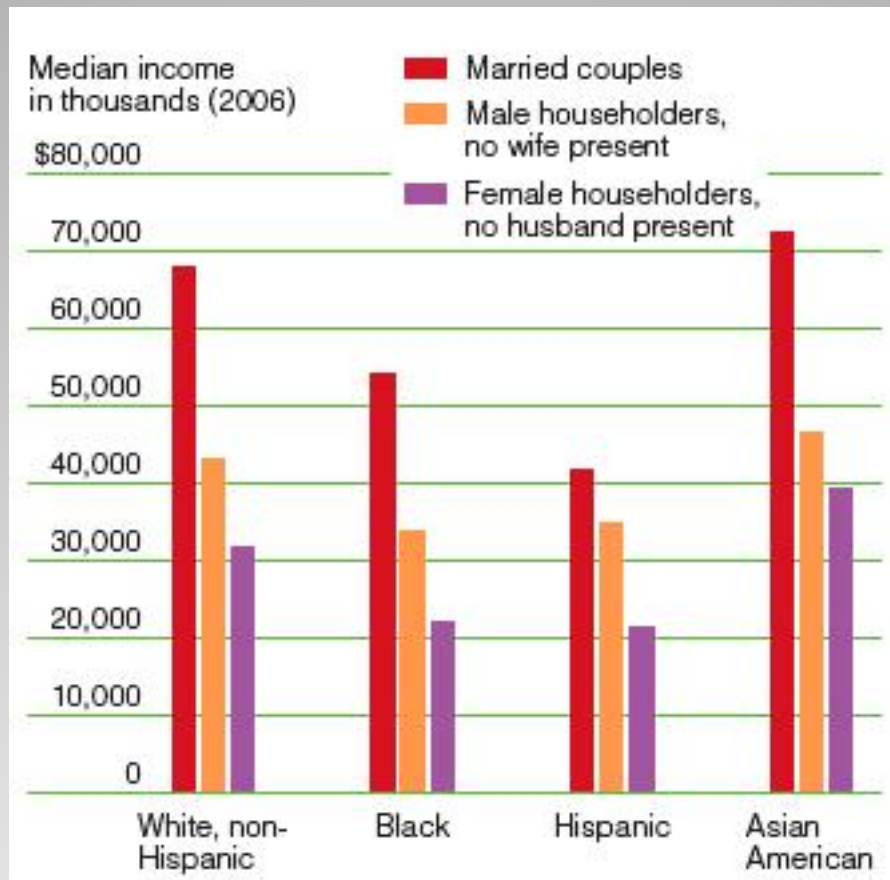
- Social class is the social structural position groups hold relative to the economic, social, political, and cultural resources of society.
- Class determines the access people have to these resources and puts groups in different positions of privilege and disadvantage.
- Class also shapes language, dress, mannerisms, taste, and other preferences.

Life Chances

- The opportunities that people have in common by virtue of belonging to a particular class.
- Life chances include the opportunity for possessing goods, having an income, and having access to particular jobs.

Social Mobilization

- Although “rags to riches” stories are common and there are examples of ordinary people who have become fabulously wealthy, such social mobility is more the exception than the rule.



Median Annual Income by Race and Household Status

Percent of population
in each income quintile

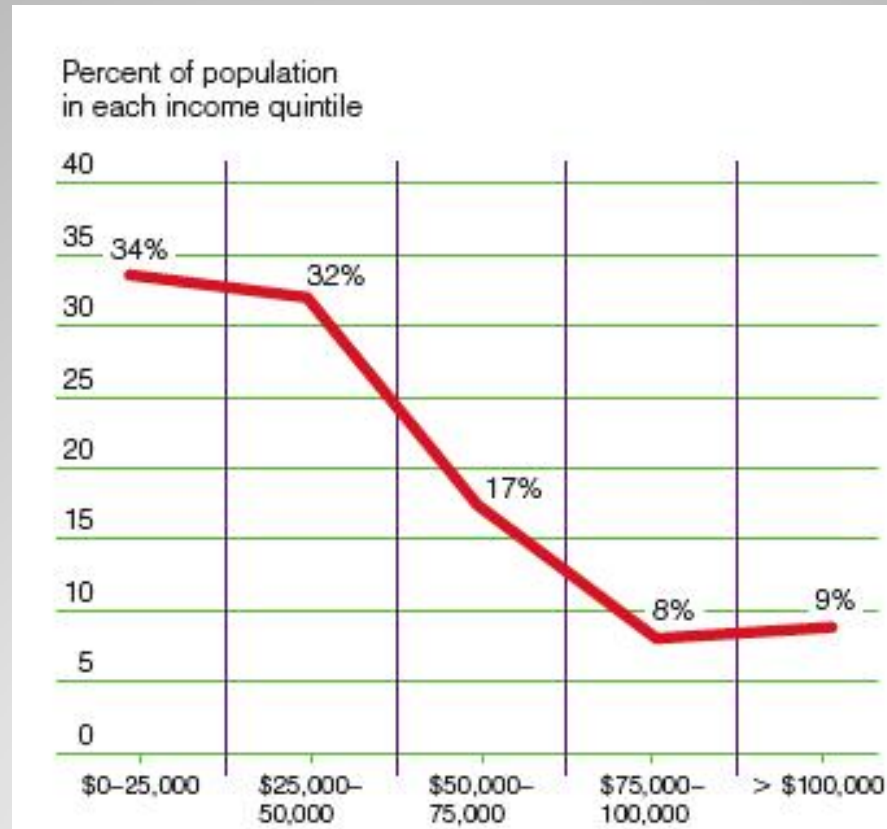


Income Distribution in the United States

Prestige

- The value others assign to people and groups.
- **Occupational prestige** is the subjective evaluation people give to jobs.
- **Educational attainment** is typically measured as the total years of formal education.

Median Income in the United States



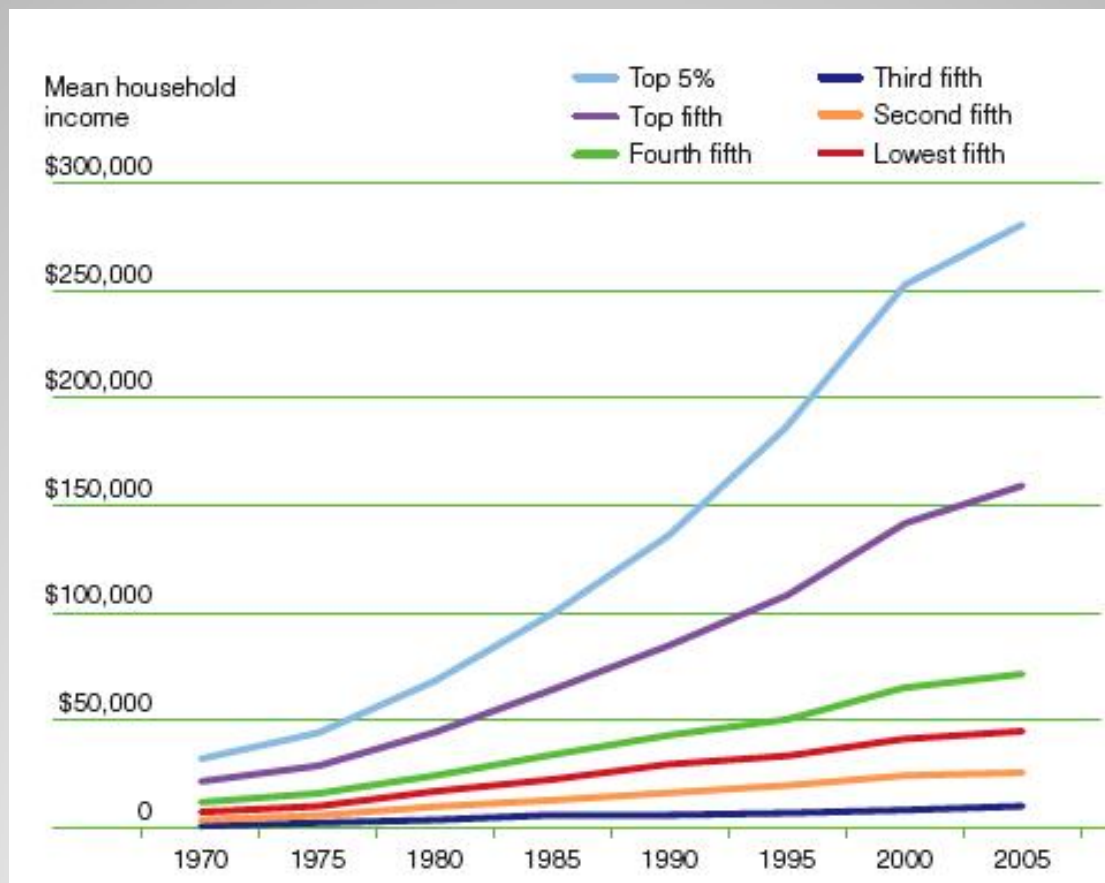
Labor Unions

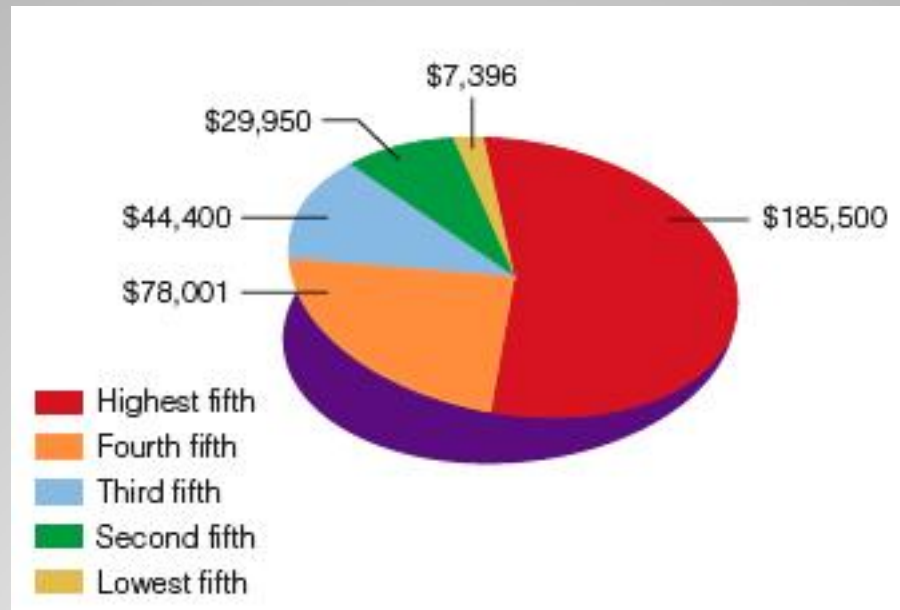
- Labor unions, traditionally dominated by White men in the skilled trades, are not only more diverse, but also represent workers in occupations typically thought of as “white collar” work.

- **Wealth** is the monetary value of everything one owns, minus debt.
 - It is calculated by adding all financial assets and subtracting all debts.
- **Income** is the amount of money brought into a household from various sources during a given period.

Wealth and Income

Mean Household Income Received by Different Income Groups, 1970–2005





Median Net Worth by Household Income

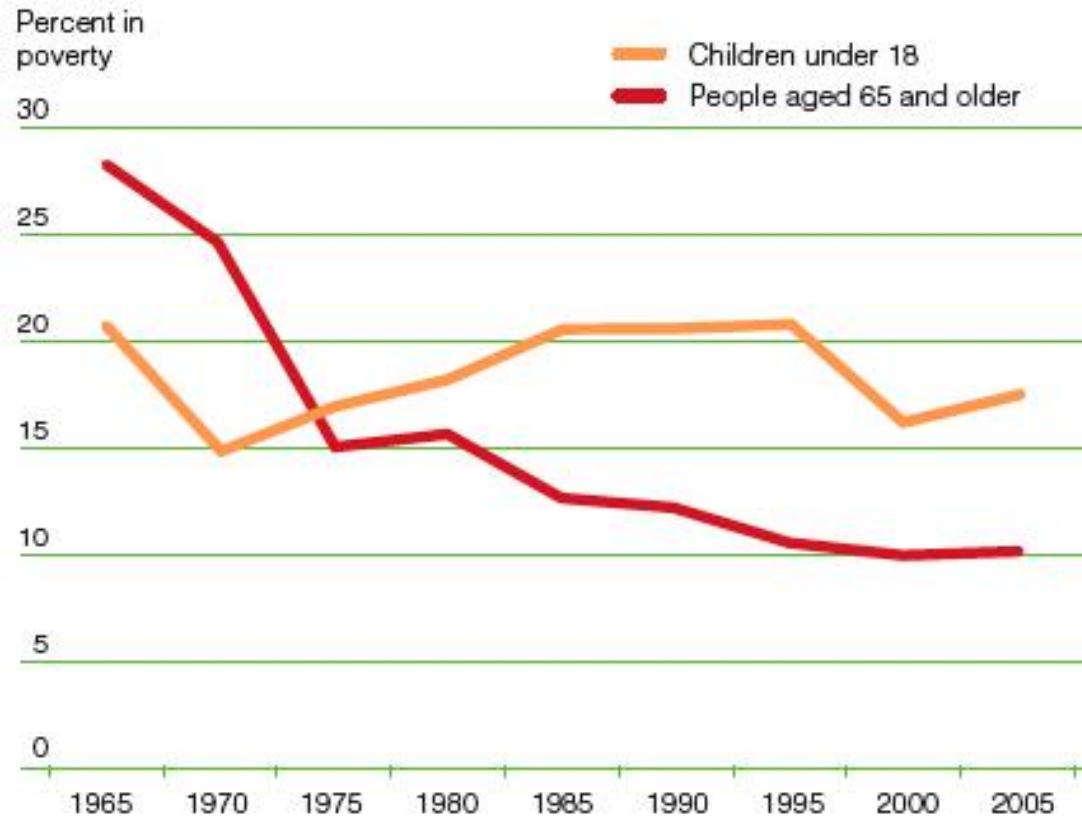
- **Myth:**

- Mothers on welfare have more children to increase the size of their welfare checks.

- **Sociological perspective:**

- No causal relationship exists between the size of welfare benefits and the number of births by welfare recipients. “Family cap” policies prohibit increasing welfare benefits with the birth of an additional child.

Debunking Society's Myths



Poverty among the Old and the Young, 1965–2005

Defining Social Mobility

- Social mobility is a person's movement from one class to another.
- Social mobility can be up or down, although the American dream emphasizes upward movement.
- Mobility can be either intergenerational, occurring between generations; or intragenerational, occurring within a generation.

Class Consciousness

- The perception that a class structure exists, along with the feeling of shared identification with others in one's class.
- There are two dimensions to the definition of class consciousness:
 - the idea that a class structure exists
 - one's class identification

Marx: Class and Capitalism

- Defined classes in terms of their relationship to the means of production.
- *Capitalist* class owns the means of production.
- *Working* class sells their labor for wages.

Weber: Three Dimensions to Stratification

- Class - economic dimension
- Status - social dimension
- Party - political dimension

Functional and Conflict Theories of Stratification

	Inequality
Functionalism	Motivates people to fill positions that are needed for the survival of the whole.
Conflict Theory	Results when those with the most resources exploit others.

Functional and Conflict Theories of Stratification

	Class Structure
Functionalism	Differentiation is essential for a cohesive society.
Conflict Theory	Different groups struggle over resources and compete for social advantage.

Functional and Conflict Theories of Stratification

	Life chances
Functionalism	Those who work hardest and succeed have greater life chances.
Conflict Theory	The most vital jobs in society are usually the least rewarded.

Social Class in the U.S.

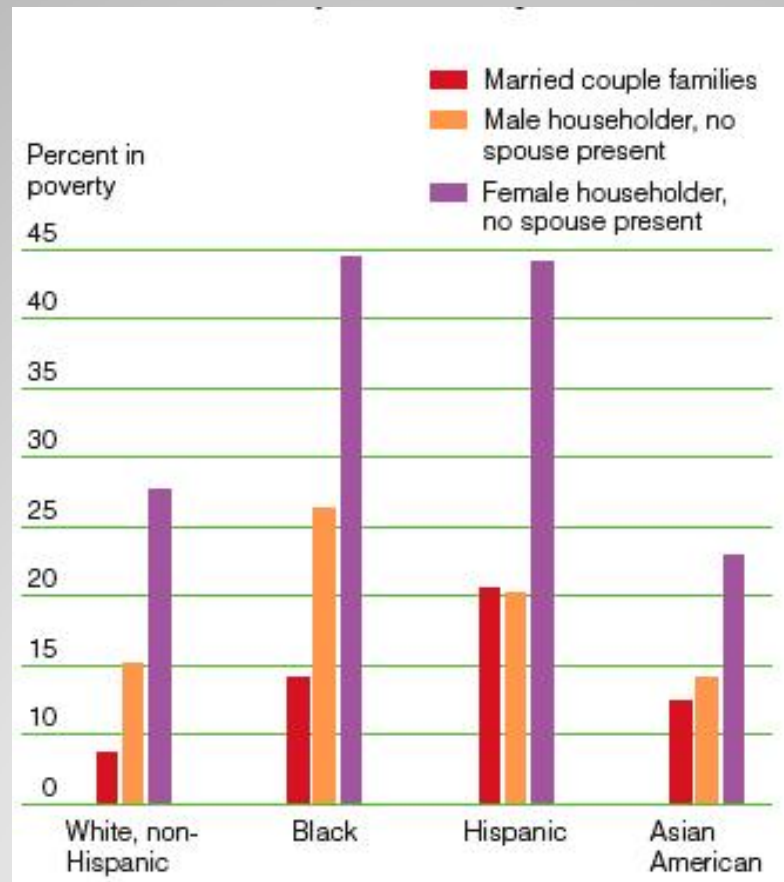
- Upper class
- Upper-middle class
- Middle class
- Lower-middle class
- Lower class
- Underclass

Disaster

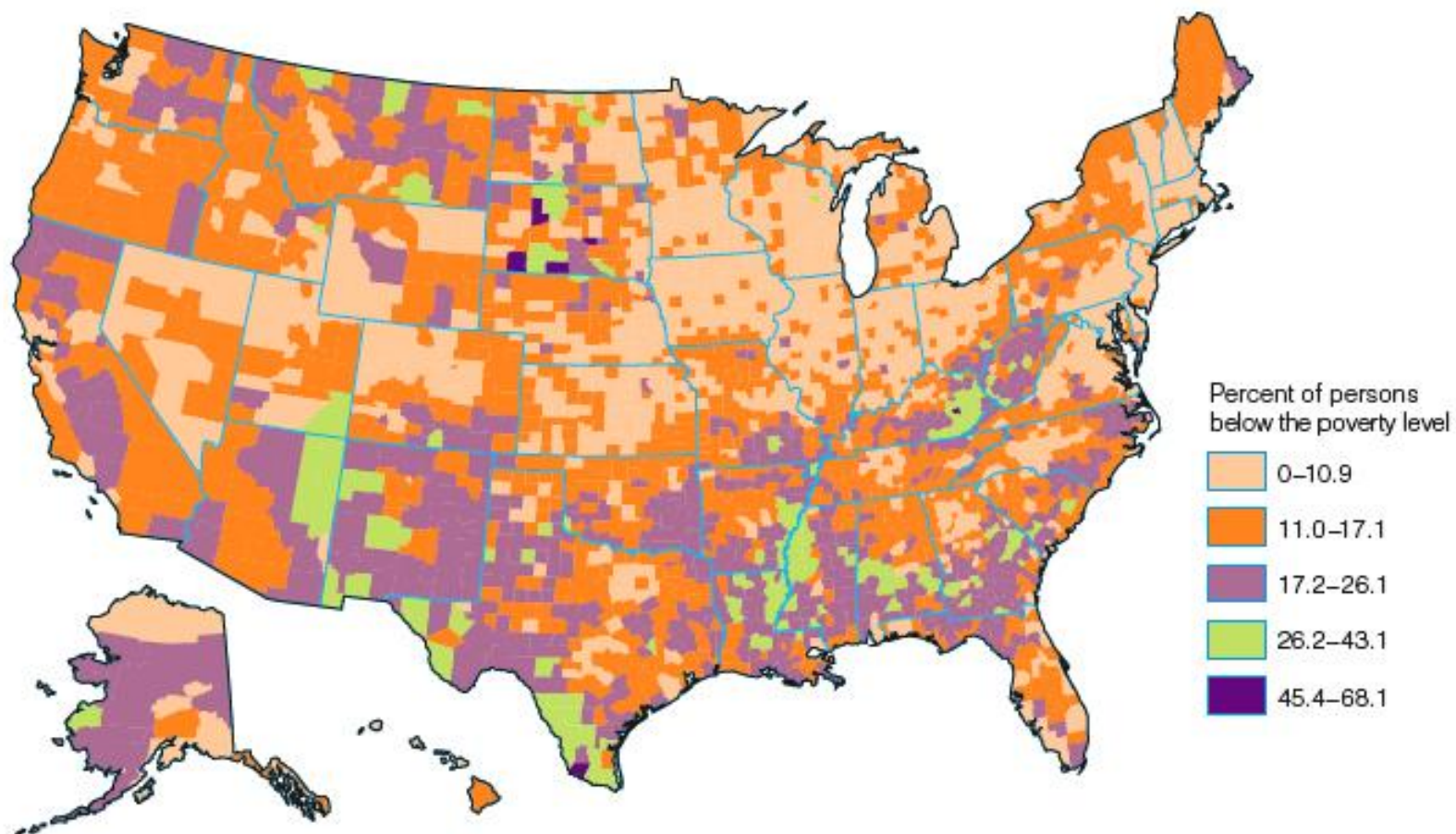


- Following Hurricane Katrina, many residents, particularly the poor, were forced to live on a raised section of Interstate 10 as the waters continued to rise.

Poverty Status by Family Type and Race



Poverty in the United States



Explanations of Poverty

- **Culture of poverty** - poverty is a way of life that is transferred from generation to generation.
- **Structural causes of poverty** - poverty is caused by economic and social transformations taking place in the U.S.