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Social Stratification  
Sociology 515  
Spring 1999  
Off. Hr. M 3-4

## SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

"Everything from the chance to stay alive during the first year after birth to the chance to view fine art; the chance to remain healthy and if sick to get well again quickly; the chance to avoid becoming a juvenile delinquent; and very crucially, the chance to complete an intermediary or higher educational grade -- these are among the chances that are crucially influenced by one's position in the class structure of a modern society."

C. W. Mills, "The Sociology of Stratification" (1951)

"Besides the specific status honor, which always rest upon distance and exclusiveness, we find all sorts of material monopolies. Such honorific preferences may consist of the privilege of wearing special costumes, of eating special dishes taboo to others, of carrying arms -- which is most obvious in its consequences -- the right to pursue certain non-professional dilettante artistic practices, e.g. to play certain musical instruments."

Max Weber, 1919

"Sociology has only one independent variable, class."

Art Stinchcombe, 1972

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."

Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, The Communist Manifesto (1848)

Stratification is the core of the sociological enterprise. Whether assumed or explicit, conscious or unconscious, silent or stated, -- any project you endeavor or any paper you may write as a Sociologist will contain the germ of a theory of stratification that guides your selection of relevant ideas, topics, and variables. The literature on stratification is necessarily immense, making up the bulk of the sociological product. In this course you will be exposed to the literature in a simultaneously grand and humble fashion. We will explore three major topics and one unifying theme in stratification in this course. The topics are as follows: contemporary analysis of class structure and income distribution; classical theories of stratification; historical and contemporary analyses of class, income, race, ethnicity and gender inequality. The unifying theme is a focus on **exploitation** as the essential source of all inequality that is unjust. The first topic is a "snapshot" of inequality in the US and in the world-economy; the second is a brief overview the major theoretical issues in stratification research with special emphasis on the two principle traditions of inquiry found in Marx and Weber. These two grand theories provide the mill for grinding hypotheses and crunching data. Topic three covers the mainstay of research in class and status inequalities. The content of the course will be covered by a combination of lecture, guest speakers, student presentations, and ample class discussion.

Sociology 515, Social Stratification, Spring 1999. Terry Boswell

BOOKS:

Wright, Erik O. 1997. Class Counts. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wilson, William. 1996. When Work Disappears. New York: Vintage

England, Paula 1992. Comparable Worth. NY: Aldine Press.

Rose, Stephen. 1992. Social Stratification (poster). New York: The New Press.

Braun, Denny. 1997. 2nd edition. The Rich Get Richer. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

Tucker, Robert C. 1978. The Marx-Engels Reader. 2nd Edition. NY: Norton.

Grusky, David B. 1994. Social Stratification: Class Race and Gender in Sociological Perspective. Boulder: Westview.

Galeano, Eduardo. 1973/97. Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent. 25 Anniversary Edition. New York: Monthly Review Press.

**Articles or Chapters on reserve in the grad study area. (additional articles and chapter selections of interest will be added)**

RECOMMENDED SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKS:

Wilson, William. 1978. The Declining Significance of Race Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

Wright, Erik O. 1985. Classes. London: Verso.

Wilson, William. The Truly Disadvantaged. Chicago: Univ. Of Chicago Press.

Roemer, John E. 1988. Free to Lose. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press.

Wright, Erik O. (ed.) 1989. The Debate on Classes. New York: Verso.

Gerth, H. H. and C. Wright Mills. 1946. From Max Weber. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

Chavets, Janet S. Gender Equity. Sage.

Requirements: Graduate seminars are best when they use a learning-while-doing methodology of presentations and papers.

Grades: Research proposal or paper: 40%; Class presentations and participation: 40%; Book Reviews: 20%

1. The week's books, articles and chapters will be divided among students who will be responsible for leading the discussion. **One week in advance**, the discussants are to provide the class with a handout listing issues, questions, strong points, weak points, and contradictions in the literature for the class to discuss.

2. Two book reviews, one for Braun and one for Boswell et. al., (>5 and ≤10 pages) are due the day the books are discussed (Aug. 31 & Nov. 2). The reviews should indicate what are the major questions asked, how are they answered and how do the answers compare to those from other sources. The reviews should be critical, pointing out specific weaknesses as well as strengths, and evaluative, saying what is done well or poorly and why. The book reviews will be discussed in class in lieu of presentations.

3. The final requirement is to write a research proposal for a project that would explain inequality in one of the empirical areas discussed in the class, such as class analysis, split labor markets, cross-national inequality, comparable worth, and so on. A proposal does **not** include analysis or conclusions (but see paper option below). This requirement is broken into three steps in order to demonstrate the typical progress of research and to facilitate higher quality papers by enabling rewriting of rough drafts.

1. **Thesis:** Design a thesis, including the **question** that you want to answer, why the question is important, what theoretical perspective you are employing, and what are your working hypotheses. The theses will be presented and discussed in class. Informal progress reports will also be periodically discussed in class for steps 2 and 3.

2. Theory and Literature review: Write a critical review of the literature directly relevant to your thesis. Contrast your theoretical perspective with alternatives in the literature, then list **propositions** about differing empirical consequences one would expect from contrasting theories.

3. Data, Methods and Operationalizations: Describe what realistic data and methods would be appropriate for answering your question. Then for each proposition, offer an empirical indicator that would **operationalize** the key concepts.

4. **Presentation of Working Draft:** Write a first full draft of your research proposal (10 p. max.; due last day of class). A formal presentation (ASA style) of your paper is required.

3. **Final Draft:** The final requirement is to rewrite the draft into a polished research proposal (following ASR style, apx. 20 pages (must be <25 pages), due May 3.

PAPER OPTION: Students with nearly complete research papers in stratification (such as MA papers, dissertation chapters, etc.) may substitute an *approved* paper instead of the proposal (all other steps above apply). A revised and **far more polished** version of the paper (ASR style) is due May 3.

## OUTLINE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

### Part I: Classical Theories of Stratification

Jan. 18 MLK Day

25 Social Welfare and Poverty: Luncheon Presentation by Lane Kenworthy  
(Please read the enclosed paper and be prepared for discussion)

Feb. 1 Overview of Stratification in the U.S.

Rose, Strat Poster; Monopoly by Parker Bros.!  
BRAUN, THE RICH GET RICHER chps. 1, 5, 6  
Grusky, Social Stratification, Pt 1, 2

Sept. 14 Introduction to Marxist Theory

Grusky, Social Stratification, Pt III, until p.113  
Tucker, Marx-Engels Reader  
Intro., xix-xxxix;  
Manifesto 469-501  
The 18th Brumaire 594-618

Sept. 21 Capital

Tucker, Marx-Engels Reader  
Capital 294-443  
Socialism 683-718

Sept 28 Weberian Theories of Status Groups

### Part II Contemporary Debates on Class Structure

Oct. 5 Exploitation

Roemer, Free To Lose  
Roemer on "Market Socialism"

Oct. 12 Contemporary Theories of Class

Wright, Classes

19 The Debate on Class Structure and Class Consciousness

Wright The Debate on Classes

26 Global Inequality

Braun revisited, chps. 3-4  
Articles on Inequality and on Human needs  
Boswell and Chase-Dunn, "the Capitalist World-System"  
**Theses Due**

Part III: Labor Market Analyses of Income, Gender, and Racial Stratification:

Nov. 2 Labor Markets and Income Inequality

England, Comparable Worth Part 1  
Browne. "Human Capital Theory: A Comprehensive Review"

Nov. 9 Gender Stratification: Patriarchy and Markets

England, Comparable Worth (remainder)  
Chavitz, Gender Equity

16 Racial Stratification: Current Conditions

Wilson, The Truly Disadvantaged.

Nov. 23 THANKSGIVING BREAK

Nov. 30 Market and Class Approaches to Race

Boswell, Brown, Brueggemann and Peters:  
Class Conflict and Racial Competition BOOK REVIEW DUE

Dec. 7 Workshop: Paper Presentations

**Working Draft of Paper Due**

Dec. 12 Final Papers Due