

Social Stratification

Human society is not homogeneous but heterogeneous. Apart from the natural differences, human beings are also differentiated according to socially approved criteria:-

- (1.) Function
- (2.) Culture
- (3.) Interest
- (4.) Rank

The ranking of individuals or group on the basis of prestige & property call stratification. Social stratification is a particular form of social inequality. All societies arrange their members in terms of superiority, inferiority and equality. Stratification is a process of interaction or differentiation whereby some people come to rank higher than others. when individuals and groups are ranked, according to some commonly accepted basis of valuation in a hierarchy of status levels based upon the inequality of social positions, social stratification occurs. Social stratification means division of society into different strata or layers.

Melvin M Tumin: Social stratification refers to “arrangement of any social group or society into hierarchy of positions that are unequal with regard to power, property, social evaluation and psychic gratification”.

Talcott Parsons “stratification is a ranking of units in a social system in accordance with the common value system”. According to Parsons some determinants of status are:-

- Kin group
- Personal qualities
- Achievements
- Possession
- Achievements
- Authority
- Power

Characteristics of Social Stratification:-

- ❖ Social Stratification is social in nature
- ❖ It is Ancient
- ❖ It exists in each Society
- ❖ Social stratification is universal
- ❖ It is in diverse forms
- ❖ Consequences are social

Forms of Social Stratification

- **Caste System**- Caste is a hereditary endogamous social group in which a person's rank and its accompanying rights and obligations are ascribed on the basis of his birth into a particular group. For example-Brahmins, Kshyatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudra.
- **Class System**-Class Stratification on the basis of class is dominant in modern society. In this, a person's position depends to a very great extent upon achievement and his ability to use to advantage the in born characteristics and wealth that he may possess.
- **Slavery System**- Slavery had economic basis. In slavery, every slave had his master to whom he was subjected. The master's power over the slave was unlimited.
- **Estate**- Estate system of medieval Europe provides another system of stratification which gave much emphasis to birth as well as to wealth and possessions. Each estate had a state.

Theories of Social Stratification:-

Conflict Theory

Conflict theorists are deeply criticizing social stratification, asserting that it benefits only some people, not all of society. Many conflict theorists draw on the work of Karl Marx. During the nineteenth-century era of industrialization, Marx believed social stratification resulted from people's relationship to production. People were divided by a single line: they either owned factories or worked in them. In Marx's time, bourgeois capitalists owned high-producing businesses, factories, and land, as they still do today. Proletariats were the workers who performed the manual labor to produce goods. Upper-class capitalists raked in profits and got rich, while working-class proletariats earned skimpy wages and

struggled to survive. With such opposing interests, the two groups were divided by differences of wealth and power. Marx saw workers experience deep alienation, isolation and misery resulting from powerless status levels (Marx 1848). Marx argued that proletariats were oppressed by the bourgeois.

Functionalism

In sociology, the functionalist perspective examines how society's parts operate. According to functionalism, different aspects of society exist because they serve a needed purpose. Sociologists Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore argued that the greater the functional importance of a social role, the greater must be the reward. The theory posits that social stratification represents the inherently unequal value of different work. Certain tasks in society are more valuable than others. Qualified people who fill those positions must be rewarded more than others. Davis and Moore stated that, in most cases, the degree of skill required for a job determines that job's importance. They also stated that the more skill required for a job, the fewer qualified people there would be to do that job. Certain jobs, such as cleaning hallways or answering phones, do not require much skill. The employees don't need a college degree. Other work, like designing a highway system or delivering a baby, requires immense skill.

Theory of Max Weber

Classic sociologist Max Weber was strongly influenced by Marx's ideas, but rejected the possibility of effective communism, he developed the three-component theory of stratification and the concept of life chances. He argues that bases of social stratification are more than one component ie. Class, status and Party. Weber supposed there were more class divisions than Marx suggested. Weber claimed there are four main classes: the upper class, the white-collar workers, the petite bourgeoisie, and the manual working class. Weber's theory more closely resembles theories of modern Western class structures embraced by sociologists, although economic status does not seem to depend strictly on earnings in the way Weber envisioned.