Formal Stratification and Dominant-Minority Interaction

Prior discussion revolved around stratification as a real issue based on class or status --- Big Questions:

a) How does it happen, and

b) Why does it happen?

Historical/World Perspective:

1) Slavery - ownership
2) Caste - by birth and unchangeable
3) Estates - established by law
4) Class - differs from others in that
   a) systems are fluid
   b) positions are somewhat achieved
   c) economically based
   d) large scale and impersonal
Modern Western Perspective

- Class systems dominate

  Life Chances (Max Weber): opportunities for future achievement based on current level of prosperity

- Class Divisions are very real

  - Upper class (250 families w/ net worth >$100 million; 1%
  - control 40% of wealth; top 10% control more than bottom 90%)

  - Middle Class; more diverse; upper and lower divisions

  - Working ("blue collar", manual occupations)

- Underclass (predominantly ethnic minority groups)

  -- economic barriers?

  -- active discrimination?

  -- result of changing economic face of America? Decline in Fordism that drew people to cities and then left them stranded?

  -- or, result of racism?

  -- or result of “welfare” culture of poverty?
Differentiating Forces Include:

Norms and Deviance

Defiance / Acceptance

Social Mobility -- What are the Chances for Change?

Key concepts

- Vertical; up and down
- Intragenerational
- Intergenerational
- Exchange (talent vs. non-talent within a strata)
- Structural (based on numbers and kinds of jobs)

Problems

- Negative Self Image – self labeling: Kikes, wops, niggers

All of above contribute to cumulative causation – perpetuation

(self? – discuss language, group solidarity, etc.) of prejudice and discrimination
Tie it all to Sociological Theory:

Marx - Economic issues of class based on control of means of production
Weber - Recognition of class, but emphasis on issues of status as mediator;
    Prestige and Pariah groups
Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore - Functional aspects dominate and are
    rewarded
Melvin Tumin - Disagrees with Davis and Moore in that much of what is
    rewarded has nothing to do with importance of social function

Where Does It All Lead?

Issues of Affluence and Poverty and division of society into sub-cultures
based on economic differences.

Absolute poverty is worst problem; relative poverty may actually cause
greater social problems in society such as America.
Responses:

Segregation
Expulsion
Xenophobia
Genocide / Annihilation
Exploitation

Responses / Interactions based on Power-Differential: Groups become superordinate or subordinate depending on control of and access to “tools” essential for progress and success. Think back to the Thomas Theorem: People respond to their perceptions of stimuli rather than to the stimuli themselves – or – or what you believe to be true, or a problem, or a barrier, may direct responses more than the actual existence of a barrier; what you perceive to be reality may be more important than the reality itself.