

..... 4th Edition

SOCIAL INEQUALITY

in a Global Age



SCOTT SERNAU



SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN A GLOBAL AGE

FOURTH EDITION

Scott Sernau

Indiana University South Bend



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC

FOR INFORMATION:

SAGE Publications, Inc.
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320
E-mail: order@sagepub.com

SAGE Publications Ltd.
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP
United Kingdom

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
B 1/I 1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044
India

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.
3 Church Street
#10-04 Samsung Hub
Singapore 049483

Associate Director: Diane McDaniel
Editorial Assistant: Lauren Johnson
Production Editor: Amy Schroller
Copy Editor: Colleen Brennan
Typesetter: C&M Digital (P) Ltd.
Proofreader: Jennifer Grubba
Indexer: Naomi Linzer
Cover Designer: Candice Harman
Marketing Manager: Jonathan Mason
Permissions Editor: Karen Ehrmann

Copyright © 2014 by SAGE Publications, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record of this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN 978-1-4522-0540-3

This book is printed on acid-free paper.



SFI label applies to text stock

13 14 15 16 17 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Preface

Social stratification and inequality have remained at the core of sociological thinking from the classical theorists on through the work of current scholars, who are demonstrating new interest in issues of race, class, and gender. Yet the concept of stratification itself can be a challenging one to teach and to study. Students are often more interested in learning about the particular aspects of inequality that they see affecting themselves than they are in examining the whole structure of social inequality. Students who have never been encouraged to think of their own experiences in terms of social class and social structure may approach the whole topic with apathy. This is not to blame students—the failure to think in terms of class is a problem deeply rooted in our society. Students may also face a course on social stratification with a certain dread: Those who are math-phobic may worry about too many statistics, and those from relatively privileged backgrounds may worry that they will be the subject of finger-pointing by “radical” professors. Although I have always tried to connect the course I teach about inequality to the lived experiences of my students and their communities, I admit that I have probably also assigned readings that have often contributed to both apathy and angst on the part of students.

At the same time that I’ve been teaching courses on inequality over the past two decades, I have also had the privilege of editing the American Sociological Association’s syllabus and instructional materials collection for inequality and stratification, and I have organized workshops on teaching courses in this subject matter at the annual meetings of various professional societies. In attending these workshops, I have realized that although instructors are often passionate about the topic, they have their own angst in teaching it. They want students to understand the foundations of classical theory in a way that actually illuminates their current studies; they don’t want students to see those foundations as just the work of “old, dead Germans.” Instructors want to incorporate exciting new material on race, class, and gender while still giving students a solid grounding in the core concepts. They are often eager to include material on the globalized economy while still helping students understand changes in their own communities. And above all, they are struggling to find ways to help students see the relevance—even the urgency—of this material to the society we are currently making and remaking. Their plea has been for materials that are organized but not pat, hard-hitting but not preachy; they are looking for ways to help students both care deeply and think deeply about the topic.

This book is an effort to answer that plea. The language and the examples I use here are straight from current headlines and everyday experience—straightforward without oversimplifying difficult issues. The classical theorists get their say, not just in a perfunctory overview at the beginning but throughout the entire book, as their ideas give foundation to current topics. At the same time, discussion of the divides of race and gender is not just appended to the chapters but integrated into the analysis and the narrative so that students can begin to grasp how differing

dimensions of inequality interrelate. Likewise, the theme of global change and the globalization of our times is integral to each chapter. Rather than tack some comparative material onto the end of each chapter, I place the U.S. experience in a global context throughout. In my teaching I have found that the way to help students see the relevance and importance of global material is to link it directly to their own lived experience, and I have brought that approach to this book.

This is not a book by committee, and I have not tried to make it sound like one. I occasionally relate personal experiences (they are, as one speaker noted, the only kind I have) and close-to-home examples. My hope is that students in turn will be able to relate the material to their own lives and communities and the changes they are witnessing in both.

The first three chapters explore the background to a sociological study of inequality. Chapter 1 gives expanded attention to the intersection of race, class, and gender—along with the related dimensions of age, sexuality, ethnicity, and religion—as a way to provoke thoughtful reflection on how these are intertwined in our social world. It presents students with a challenge to think systematically, maybe for the first time, about how social inequalities of class, race, and gender have affected who they are and what Max Weber would have called their life chances. The next two chapters explore the fervant debate that has swirled around the topic of inequality since the very first civilizations, and the emerging global economy that provides the context for understanding a society's struggles with poverty and inequality. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 explore how class, race, and gender divide U.S. and global social structure. These three chapters are followed by two that round out Max Weber's analysis of the dimensions of inequality: Chapter 7 addresses prestige and lifestyle, and Chapter 8 discusses political power. These chapters bring the ideas of Weber, Thorstein Veblen, and C. Wright Mills to life with current examples of changing lifestyles and patterns of consumption as well as debates about such things as campaign finance reform. The chapters in Part III look at the challenges posed by inequality: education and mobility, poverty and place, public policy, and the role of social movements. These chapters examine the classic studies of mobility but also the current debates on educational reform; the realities of urban, suburban, and rural poverty; the challenges of public policy, from the New Deal to welfare reform and beyond; and the struggles of both old and new social movements. The final chapter, on the globalization of race, class, and gender, is both a call to understanding—linking the labor movement, the women's movement, and the civil rights movement just as previous chapters linked class, gender, and race—and a call to action. It describes new movements whose successes show that despite real societal constraints, positive action toward a more just society is possible.

The combination of critical thinking and personal involvement is carried into the "Making Connections" and "Making a Difference" resources and activities at the end of each chapter. These provide students with links to reliable sources of further information through both the world and the World Wide Web. They also offer students options for exploring the topics discussed in the chapters in more detail, applying concepts to their own experiences, backgrounds, and local communities. These wide-ranging exercises amplify the local-global connections made in the book and give students and instructors the opportunity to deepen and extend the learning process. The message throughout this volume is that although there are no easy answers, we must not assume that there are no answers. Rather, we must accept the challenge to move on to deeper understandings and to new and better questions. My hope is that every reader finds here a challenge to move from apathy and angst to analysis and action.

Acknowledgments

The Sage/Pine Forge people have been a wonderful team and a delight to work with. Jerry Westby, senior editor, helped craft this project in its early stages, and Ben Penner and David Repetto provided insights, enthusiasm, and encouragement throughout. It has been a pleasure to work with a publisher who not only understands “market forces” but also truly grasps social forces and the important social justice issues of our day. This is a rarity, and I have enjoyed the collaboration. Karen Wiley, production editor, cheerfully and efficiently organized everything, including last-minute updates, into a coherent whole. Pei-Chun Lee was a wonderful research assistant who collected and updated data. Melinda Masson repaired my problematic prose and carefully checked sources. The book is also enriched by a collaboration with two talented young photographers, Catherine Alley and Elena Grupp, who provided photo essays set in rural Honduras, the Navajo reservation of Arizona, and the old industrial corridor of South Bend, Indiana. Their eye for the challenges and harsh realities as well as the beauty and cultural richness of struggling places is a wonderful complement to the message of the text.

Books such as this live and die at the hands of reviewers, and I’ve been fortunate to have had some of the best. Thanks go to those who read the early drafts of the first chapters and provided the insights to build this into a much stronger book.

For the first edition:

William L. Breedlove, College of Charleston

Jean Davison, American University

John A. Noakes, Franklin and Marshall College

Blaine Stevenson, Central Michigan University

Richard Tardanico, Florida International University

Robert Wendt, Millikin University

For the second edition:

Michael Bourgeois, University of California, Santa Barbara

William L. Breedlove, College of Charleston

Alan Brown, University of Delaware

Kebba Darboe, Minnesota State University, Mankato

Alexandra Hrycak, Reed College

Joya Misra, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Christina Myers, Emporia State University

Jon Pease, University of Maryland

Michaela Simpson, Western New England College

Robert Wood, Rutgers University

Anna Zajicek, University of Arkansas

For the third edition:

Erin K. Anderson, Washington College

James C. Cavendish, University of South Florida

Julie A. Kmee, Washington State University

Regina Smith Oboler, Ursinus College

Leslie Wasson, Chapman University

Robert E. Wood, Rutgers University, Camden

Their resounding enthusiasm for the book and its contributions kept me writing, while at the same time their painstaking critiques of the chapters kept me honest and constantly refining the material. The book's final form owes a great deal to their suggestions that I reorganize some of the chapters to present the material with maximum clarity as well as to highlight important issues concerning race and gender, global economic change, and social movements.

Personal thanks go to my wife, Susan, and my family for their support and understanding when deadlines approached and weekends at the beach became weekends at the computer.

Brief Contents

Preface	xiii
Acknowledgments	xv
PART I. ROOTS OF INEQUALITY	1
1. The Gordian Knot of Race, Class, and Gender	3
2. The Great Debate	27
3. The Global Divide: Inequality Across Societies	53
PART II. DIMENSIONS OF INEQUALITY	83
4. Class Privilege	85
5. Racial and Ethnic Inequality	109
6. Gender and Sexuality Inequality	141
7. Status Prestige	161
8. Power and Politics	181
PART III. CHALLENGES OF INEQUALITY	207
9. Moving Up: Education and Mobility	209
10. Abandoned Spaces, Forgotten Places: Poverty and Place	233
11. Reversing the Race to the Bottom: Poverty and Policy	259
12. Challenging the System: Social Movements in a Global Age	289
Glossary	319
References	325
Index	335
About the Author	351

Detailed Contents

Preface	xiii
Acknowledgments	xv
PART I. ROOTS OF INEQUALITY	1
1. The Gordian Knot of Race, Class, and Gender	3
Dimensions of an Unequal World	3
Intersections of Race, Class, and Gender in the United States	8
The Development of Inequality: Race, Class, and Gender Across Societies	12
Hunting and Gathering Societies	12
Horticultural and Herding Societies	14
Agrarian Societies	16
Life on the Edge: Frontiers and Ports	18
Industrial Societies	19
The Coming of Postindustrial Society	23
A Social Network Understanding of Inequality	25
Key Points	26
For Review and Discussion	26
Making Connections	26
2. The Great Debate	27
The Historical Debate	28
Arguments From the Ancients	29
The Challenge From New Faiths	33
The Social Contract	36
The Sociological Debate	37
Karl Marx and Class Conflict	37
Max Weber and Life Chances	43
Émile Durkheim and the Search for Order	44
Conflict and Functionalist Approaches to the Debate	45
Reframing the Debate	47
Lenski's Synthesis	47
Libertarian and Rational Choice Thinking	48
Postmodernism and Critical Theory	49
Key Points	50
For Review and Discussion	51
Making Connections	51

3. The Global Divide: Inequality Across Societies	53
Worlds Coming Apart and Coming Together	53
The Double Divide	59
The Gap Between Nations	59
The Gap Within Nations	62
The Global Debate	65
Modernization	66
Dependency	66
Neoliberalism	67
World Systems	68
Globalization: The Ties That Bind	69
Immigration: Seeking to Cross the Divide	74
The Market Paradox	77
Key Points	78
For Review and Discussion	78
Making Connections	78
Making a Difference	79
Photo Essay: Honduras	80

PART II. DIMENSIONS OF INEQUALITY **83**

4. Class Privilege	85
Wealth and Property	86
Occupation	91
Income	99
Class Structure	105
Growing Inequality	106
Key Points	107
For Review and Discussion	108
Making Connections	108
5. Racial and Ethnic Inequality	109
A Debt Unpaid: Internal Colonialism	112
Native Americans	113
African Americans	117
Hispanic Americans	121
Irish Americans and New European Groups	125
Middleman Minorities and Ethnic Solidarity	126
The Analytic Debate: Cultures and Structures of Poverty	129
Colorful Language	133
Key Points	135
For Review and Discussion	136
Making Connections	136
Making a Difference	137
Photo Essay: Navajoland	138

6. Gender and Sexuality Inequality	141
When Men Were Men	141
Masculinity as Privilege	141
Masculinity as Vulnerability: The Harder They Fall	143
From Glass Slippers to Glass Ceilings	144
You've Come a Long Way, Maybe	144
Closing the Gaps	147
Work and Family: The Double Burden and the Second Shift	152
Gender and Class Around the World	156
Changing Norms on Gender and Sexuality	157
Key Points	158
For Review and Discussion	158
Making Connections	159
Making a Difference	160
7. Status Prestige	161
The Quest for Honor	161
Socialization: Acquiring Marks of Distinction	166
Association: Whom You Know	169
Lifestyles of the Rich and the Destitute	173
Residence	173
Fashion	174
Transportation and Leisure	175
Tastes in Transition	176
Meet the Bobos	176
The Millionaires Next Door	177
The Overspent American	178
Communities of Recognition	179
Key Points	179
For Review and Discussion	180
Making Connections	180
8. Power and Politics	181
People Power and Powerful People	181
Class Consciousness	182
Black Power?	183
Brown Power?	188
The Gender Gap	190
Religion, Region, and Values	191
The Politics of Economic Crisis	193
Who Rules? The Power Elite Debate	195
Changing the Rules: Campaign Finance Reform	198
Global Power: Who Really Rules?	201
Monopoly Power	203

Key Points	205
For Review and Discussion	205
Making Connections	206

PART III. CHALLENGES OF INEQUALITY **207**

9. Moving Up: Education and Mobility **209**

Getting Ahead	209
Social Mobility and Social Reproduction	210
Status Attainment	213
Education: Opening Doors, Opening Minds	214
Educational Access and Success	214
Unequal Education and "Savage Inequalities"	217
No Child Left Behind	220
Ladders With Broken Rungs	223
Raising the Bar: Human Capital and Gatekeeping	223
On Track, Off Track, Dead in Your Tracks	224
Clearing the Bar: Career Trajectories	228
Blocked Opportunity: "Ain't No Makin' It"	230
Key Points	231
For Review and Discussion	231
Making Connections	232
Making a Difference	232

10. Abandoned Spaces, Forgotten Places: Poverty and Place **233**

Urban Poverty: Abandoned Spaces	234
Deindustrialization and the Changing Metropolis	235
The Making and Unmaking of the Postindustrial City	236
Brain-Gain and Brain-Drain Cities	239
Suburban Poverty: The Urban Fringe	242
Rural Poverty: Forgotten Places	243
The Black Belt	247
American Highlands	248
The Barrio Border and the Rural Southwest	248
The Central Plains	249
Poverty in the Global Ghetto	251
Key Points	254
For Review and Discussion	254
Making Connections	255
Making a Difference	255
Photo Essay: Deindustrialization	256

11. Reversing the Race to the Bottom: Poverty and Policy **259**

From Welfare to Work	259
The Challenge of the Margins: Antipoverty Programs	260
The New Deal	261
The War on Poverty	263

The War on Welfare	264
The Return of Welfare Reform	267
Health Care Reform	272
Extreme Poverty: Homelessness and Hunger	276
Problems of Extreme Poverty	276
Fraying in the Safety Net	277
Homelessness	277
Hunger	279
Poverty Programs Among Advanced Industrial Nations	280
The Private World of Poverty	283
Key Points	286
For Review and Discussion	286
Making Connections	287
Making a Difference	287
12. Challenging the System: Social Movements in a Global Age	289
The Enduring Struggle: The Labor Movement	291
No Sweat: International Labor and Consumer Activism	295
Occupy Wisconsin: The Return of Labor Struggle	298
Gender and Power: The Women's Movement	300
Gay Rights: Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Equal Access	305
Race and Power: The Civil Rights Movement	307
No Dumping: The Environmental Justice Movement	311
The Happiest Place on Earth	312
One World After All	314
Key Points	316
For Review and Discussion	317
Making Connections	317
Making a Difference	318
Glossary	319
References	325
Index	335
About the Author	351

PART I

Roots of Inequality

Chapter 1 The Gordian Knot of Race, Class, and Gender

Chapter 2 The Great Debate

Chapter 3 The Global Divide: Inequality Across Societies

CHAPTER 1

The Gordian Knot of Race, Class, and Gender

When Alexander the Great brought his armies across Asia Minor, he was reportedly shown the Gordian knot, an intricate, tightly bound tangle of cords tied by Gordius, king of Phrygia. It was said that only the future ruler of all Asia would be capable of untying the knot. The story recounts that a frustrated Alexander finally sliced the knot open with his sword.

There are many dimensions to inequality, and all of these dimensions are inter-related. **Class**, **race**, and **gender** are three of inequality's core dimensions. Asking which of them is most important may be like asking, Which matters more in the making of a box: height, length, or width? These dimensions are like the 9 to 11 dimensions that quantum physics imagines for our universe: tangled, intertwined, some hard to see, others hard to measure, but all affecting the makeup of the whole. We could note other dimensions as well. Age, for example, can provide both advantage and disadvantage, privileges and problems. We stereotype both ends of the age spectrum: "silly teenagers" who talk, dress, and act funny, and "silly old codgers" who talk, dress, and act funny. Age is unlike class, race, or gender, however, in that unless our lives are cut short, we all move through all age categories. Sexuality and sexual orientation also constitute a complex dimension. Debates over gay marriage and who qualifies as a partner for the purposes of health care, tax, and housing benefits highlight how sexuality can be a dimension of privilege or disadvantage. Stereotypes, discrimination, and vulnerability to violence are also bound up in the sexuality dimension. Some dimensions, such as race, **ethnicity**, and religion, are frequently so bound together that they are hard to disentangle. In this chapter, we explore some of the dimensions of inequality. We can't completely untangle this knot in our social fabric, but we can at least slice into it.

Dimensions of an Unequal World

Inequality is at the core of sociology and its analysis of society. It is also at the core of your daily life experience, although you may not realize it. You may know you are broke. You may wish you were rich. You may be angry about the time you felt rebuffed as a black female—or as a white male. You may have a sense that some

people's lives have been a lot easier than yours—or that some have had a much harder time. In the United States in particular, and in most of the world in general, we are continually affected by social inequalities, yet we are rarely encouraged to think in those terms.

We know that many people are poor, but why are they poor? Perhaps they are just lazy. That's certainly possible—I have met some very lazy people. But, come to think of it, not all of them are poor! If you have ever worked for a “lazy” supervisor or dealt with a “lazy” professional (not among your professors, I hope!), you know that it's possible for some people to be less than diligent and still command positions of authority and high salaries. Perhaps the poor are just unlucky. It is certain that luck matters a great deal in our society. You may know of people who have had “bad luck”: They've lost their jobs, or are in fear of losing long-held positions, just because their companies are closing or moving. Yet, when we step back to look at the numbers, we find there are a great many of these “unlucky” individuals out there, all with similar stories. Patterns that go beyond individual misfortune are clearly at work.

You may also know people who “have it made” and wonder how they got to where they are. If you ask them, most will decline to claim special talents or brilliance; instead, they're likely to say something about diligence and hard work. Hard work certainly can't hurt anyone seeking success. But then again, I know of a woman who works 12-hour days doing the backbreaking work of picking vegetables and then goes home to care for three tired and hungry children. She works hard, but she does not seem to be climbing the ladder of success. Having access to the right schools, financial resources, business and professional contacts, and particular opportunities seems to play a large role in turning hard work into hard cash. The sociological study of social inequality does not negate individual differences and efforts, but it seeks to examine patterns that go beyond individual cases, to explore differences in access and opportunity and the constraints that shape people's choices.

Sociologists are interested not only in the fact of inequality but also in how this inequality is structured. When geologists are trying to understand the structure of rock formations, they look for strata: layers with discernible borders between the levels. Sociologists look for social stratification—that is, how the inequalities in a society are sorted into identifiable layers of persons with common characteristics. Those layers are social classes. Although scholars have examined the structure of social classes since the mid-nineteenth century, most of us rarely think in class terms. Particularly in the United States (as well as in some other countries, such as Canada and Australia), the cultural emphasis has been on the equal standing of all members of society; Americans are generally reluctant to use the language of class beyond vague and all-encompassing allusions to being “middle-class.” The term *middle class* once referred quite specifically to that group that stood in the middle ground between the common working classes and the wealthy propertied classes. Today, a wide range of people willingly claim middle-class status, for it seems uppity to label oneself upper-class, and almost no one wants to admit to being lower-class, which sounds like an admission of personal failings.

Certainly a simple division of American society into distinct social classes is not easy, and the difficulty is compounded by inequalities that come with gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, and age. Yet, if we look even casually at various neighborhoods,