

Class, Status and Power

“Inequalities”

This is a relatively neutral term
theoretically.

“Stratification”

- The term “strat” can be thought of as theoretically neutral, just like “inequality”
- Many sociologists talk about “strat” without implying any Paradigm
- However, in a narrow, technical sense, the term “strat” can be read as implying a particular Paradigm.
- Many words in natural science and social science have such paradigmatic implications.

Structural-Functionalism

- S-F is a Research Paradigm
- In Intro. Soc., Classical Theory and Contemporary Theory you learn about S-F
- S-F emphasizes the problem of order
- Structures are ordered patterns
- Functions are the ways structures evolve
- S-F theorists and researchers often use the term “strat” to mean their view of inequalities as “functional” for societies

S-F Strat versus Marxist Class

- Marxist, Marxian and Neo-Marxian thinkers contribute to Critical Theory
- The Critical Theory Research Paradigm tends to emphasize the idea that inequalities are NOT functional for everyone
- Class oppression in Capitalist Societies is a key idea for Marx & Marxian thinking
- Sometimes the debate is between S-F strat and Neo-Marxian “class”

Class, Status and Power

- In addition to S-F and Neo-Marxian theory and research there is also another idea.
- Max Weber emphasized the importance of *status* (prestige, honor) in addition to economic class
- Weber also emphasized the importance of *power* (political power, domination, Herrschaft, patriarchy, patrimonialism, prebendalism, feudalism, modern bureaucratic, etc.!!)

Levels of Precision in Language

- In everyday life we use words without a lot of precision.
- Ethnomethodologists have indicated that it is part of social organization to practice the “etc” principle – to ignore mistakes in speech (e.g. corps d’esprit v. esprit d’corps, “methodological” v. methodical)
- In natural science and social science it is very important to move to a more precise way of speaking and writing
- This is very confusing to undergraduate students!

“Jargon” or Necessary Precision?

- Many people feel that social science uses too much “jargon”
- But technical terms are often necessary to gain precision (tt)
- In the study of inequality we definitely need to be as precise as possible
- Yet even sociologists do not always use the terms in a precisely defined way
- “Operational definition” is even more precise!