



# What *is* sociology anyway?



*Sociology* is the study of human life.



*Sociology* is the study of human life.

*Sociology* is the study of society.



*Sociology* is the study of human life.

*Sociology* is the study of society.



*Sociology* is the study of human life.

*Sociology* is the study of society.

*Sociology* is the systematic study of human behavior, social interaction, social institutions, and society.



*“The fact is that most sociologists regard their field as an **approach** rather than as a subject matter, a **perspective** rather than a body of knowledge. What differentiates us from other observers of the human scene is how we look out at the world – the way our eyes are focused, the way our intellectual reflexes are set, the way our imaginations are tuned.”* –Kai T. Erikson, Yale University



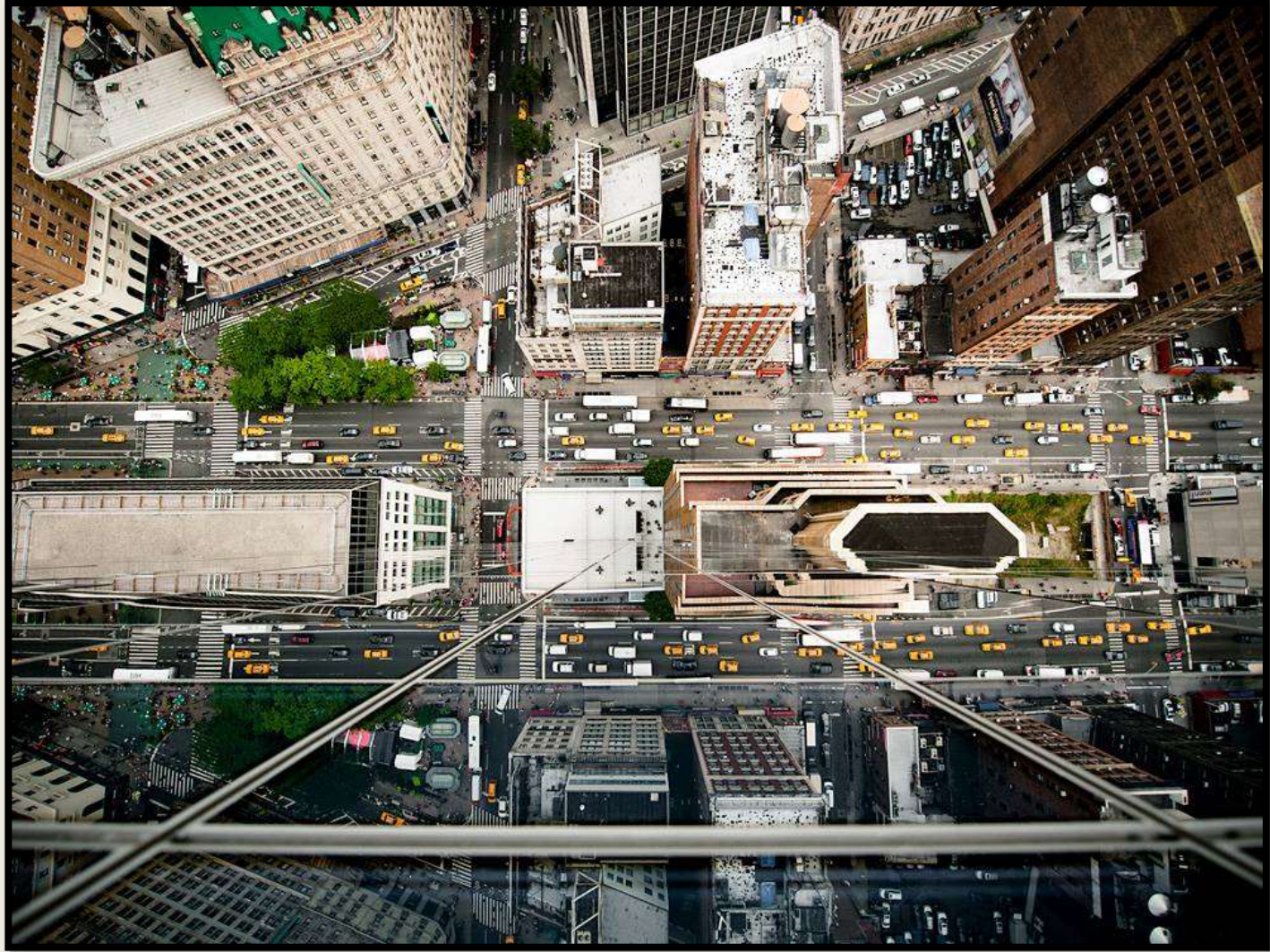
# What *is* a sociological perspective?



# What is a sociological perspective?



# What is a sociological perspective?



THE  
SOCIOLOGICAL  
IMAGINATION

FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY EDITION



C. WRIGHT MILLS

With a new Afterword by Todd Gitlin

“vivid awareness  
of the relationship  
between *personal  
experience* and the  
*wider society*”

–C. Wright Mills  
(1916-1962)





# Why do people become homeless?



# Why do people become homeless?

## Biography



# Why do people become homeless?

Biography

History

Social Structure

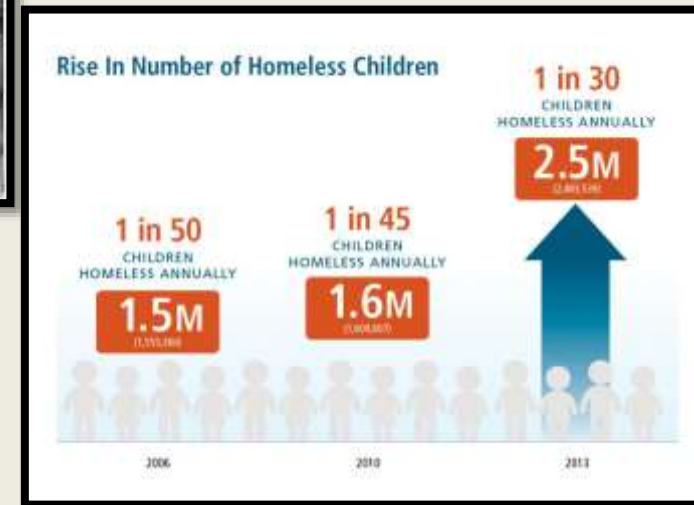
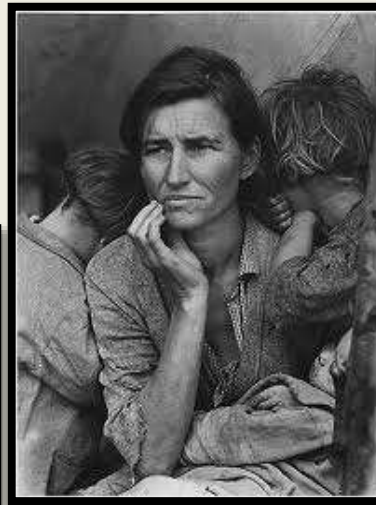




# Why do people become homeless?

History

Biography

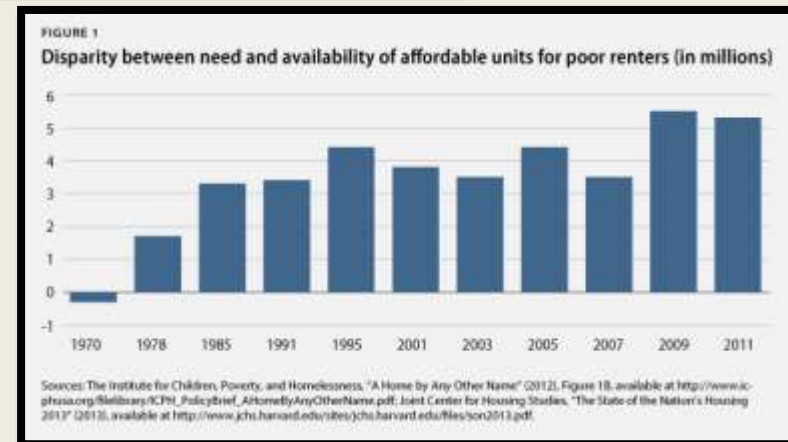
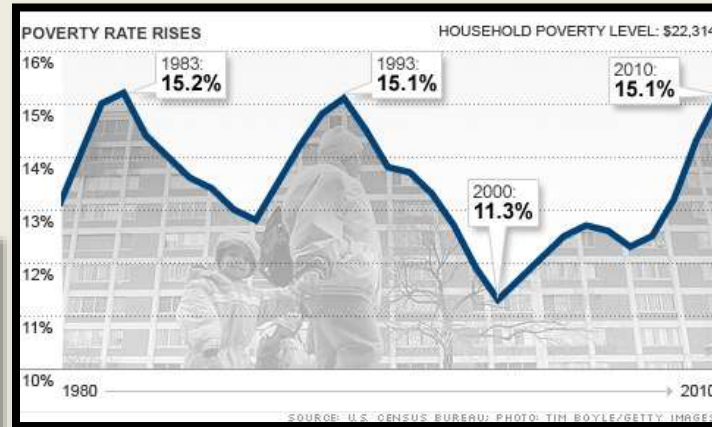


Social Structure

# Why do people become homeless?

## History

## Biography



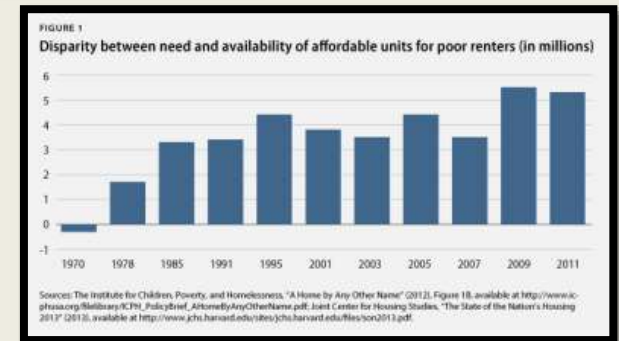
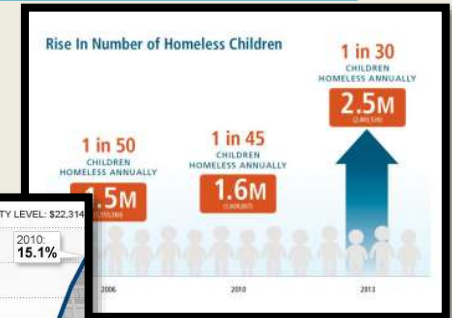
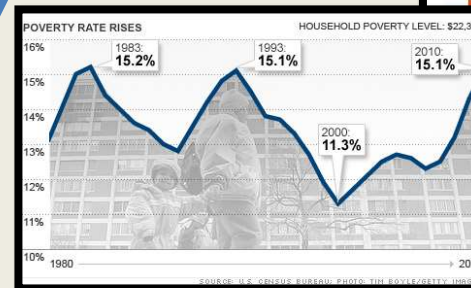
## Social Structure

# Why do people become homeless?

## Biography



## History



## Social Structure

*“When, in a city of 100,000, only one man is unemployed, that is his **personal trouble**, and for its relief we properly look to the character of the man, his skills, and his immediate opportunities. But when in a nation of 50 million employees, 15 million men are unemployed, that is an **issue**, and we may not hope to find its solution within the range of opportunities open to any one individual.”*

*~C. Wright Mills, 1959*

# History and Emergence of Sociology



# August Comte (1798-1857)

- French Philosopher
- Founder of Sociology
- Argued that the methods used in the natural sciences should also be applied to the objective study of society
- Social Laws: Social Statics + Social Dynamics



Marx

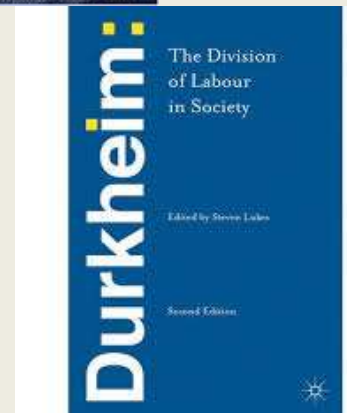
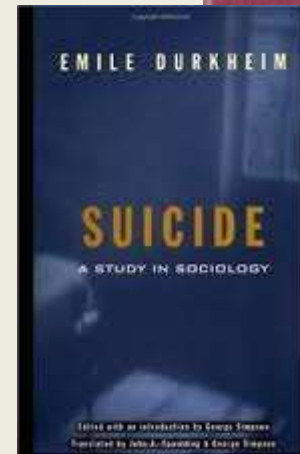
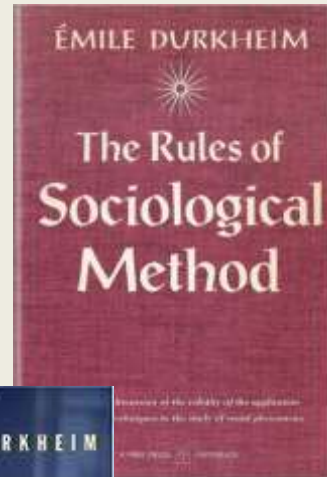
Weber

Durkheim



# Emile Durkheim (1855-1917)

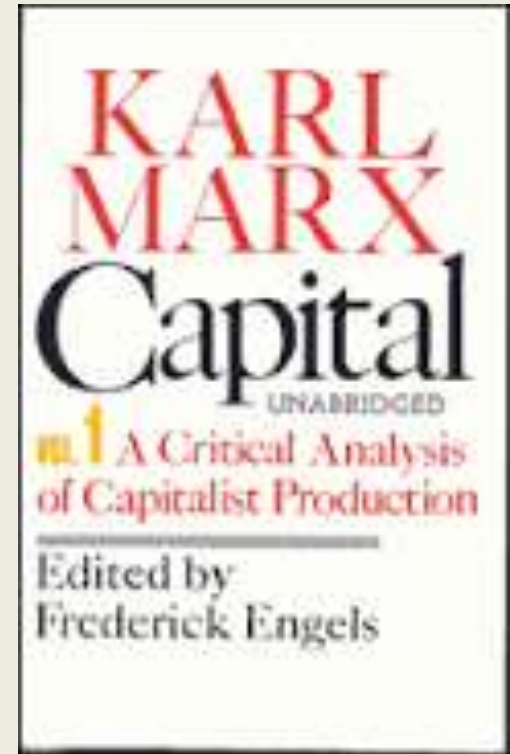
- French Sociologist
- *Functionalist* theoretical tradition
- *Social Facts*
  - Patterned ways of acting, thinking, and feeling that exist outside any one individual, but that exert social control over each person
- *Social Solidarity*
  - *Mechanical Solidarity* – traditional societies where people share beliefs and values and perform common activities
  - *Organic Solidarity* – diverse division of labor in society
  - *Anomie*: condition in which social control becomes ineffective as a result of the loss of shared values and of a sense of purpose in society





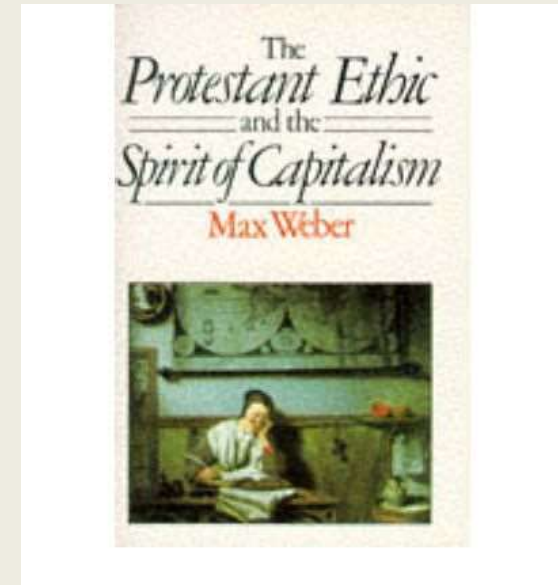
# Karl Marx (1818-1883)

- German Economist and Philosopher
- *Conflict* perspective
- Unlike Durkheim (whose focus was on social order), Marx believed that it was the economic conflict between the capitalist class (*bourgeoisie*) and the working class (*proletariat*) that would lead to social change.
- *Alienation*
  - A feeling of powerlessness and estrangement from one's work, from other people, and from oneself



# Max Weber (1864-1920)

- German Social Scientist
- Emphasized that sociology should be *value free*—research should be conducted in a scientific manner and should exclude the researcher's personal values and economic interests.
- Believed that bureaucracies were becoming increasingly oriented toward routine administration and a specialized division of labor.
- For Weber, *rational bureaucracy* (and not class struggle) was the most significant factor in determining the social relationships between people in industrialized societies.



# Major Theoretical Approaches

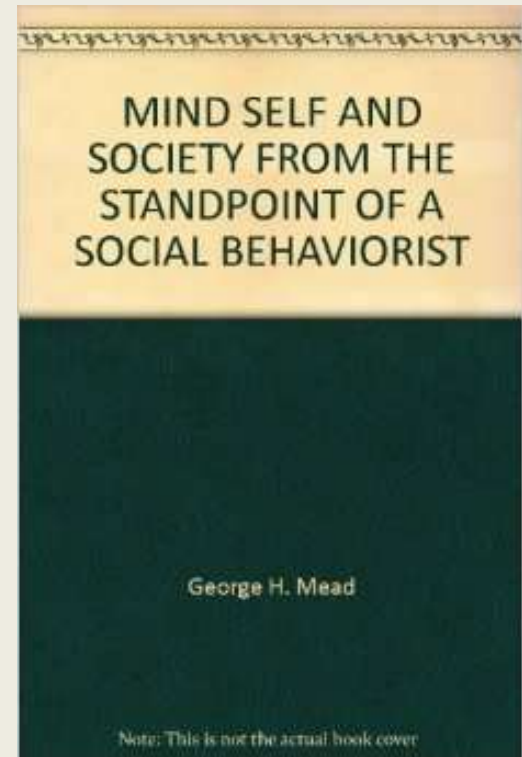
Perspective	Level of Analysis	View of Society
Functionalist	Macro	Society is composed of interrelated parts that work together to maintain stability within society. The stability is threatened by dysfunctional acts and institutions.

# Major Theoretical Approaches

Perspective	Level of Analysis	View of Society
Functionalist	Macro	Society is composed of interrelated parts that work together to maintain stability within society. The stability is threatened by dysfunctional acts and institutions.
Conflict	Macro	Society is characterized by social inequality; social life is a struggle for scarce resources. Social arrangements benefit some groups at the expense of others.

# George Herbert Mead (1863-1931)

- American philosopher, psychologist, and sociologist
- Generalized Other
  - The norms, values, attitudes, and expectations of people “in general.”
- Role Taking
- The “I” and the “Me”
  - “I” = active, spontaneous, creative
  - “Me” = attitudes and demands of others and the awareness of those demands



# Major Theoretical Approaches

Perspective	Level of Analysis	View of Society
Functionalist	Macro	Society is composed of interrelated parts that work together to maintain stability within society. The stability is threatened by dysfunctional acts and institutions.
Conflict	Macro	Society is characterized by social inequality; social life is a struggle for scarce resources. Social arrangements benefit some groups at the expense of others.
Symbolic Interactionist	Micro	Society is a sum of interactions of people and groups. Behavior is learned in interaction with other people; how people define a situation becomes the foundation for how they behave.

# Comparing Major Theoretical Paradigms

	<b>Functionalism</b>	<b>Conflict Theory</b>	<b>Symbolic Interactionism</b>
Level of Analysis	Macro	Macro	Micro
Core Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What keeps society functioning smoothly?</li> <li>• What are the parts of society and how do they relate?</li> <li>• What are the intended and unintended outcomes of an event?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are wealth and power distributed in society?</li> <li>• How do people with wealth and power keep them?</li> <li>• Are there groups that get ahead in this society and why?</li> <li>• How are society's resources and opportunities divided?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do people co-create the society?</li> <li>• How does social interaction influence, create, and sustain human relationships?</li> <li>• Do people change behavior from one setting to another, and if so, why?</li> </ul>

# Meso or Mid-Range Theoretical Orientation

- Focus on organizations, companies, social institutions, laws, and groups of people organized around similar interests.





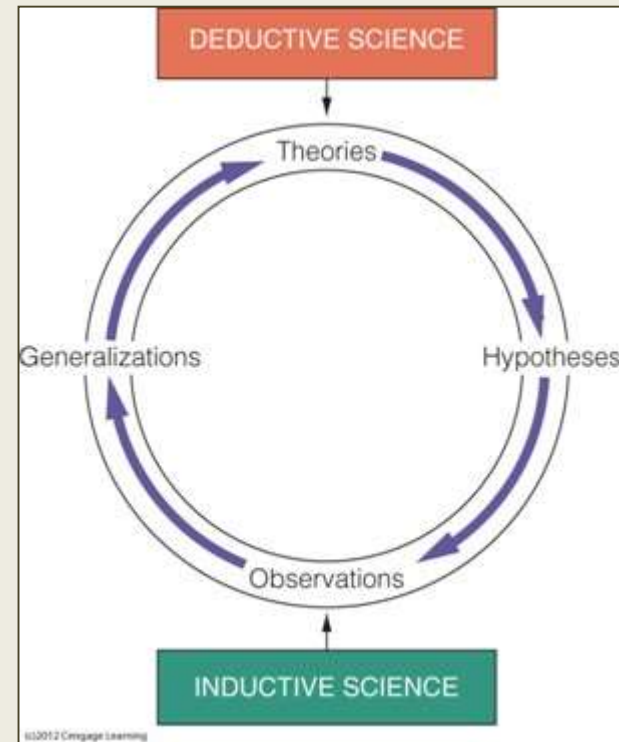
# Core Areas of Sociology

The American Sociological Association (ASA) currently has 52 sections

Section	2015	Section	2015	Section	2015
<b>Sex &amp; Gender</b>	<b>1,176</b>	International Migration	625	Body and Embodiment	321
<b>Culture</b>	<b>1,115</b>	Science, Knowledge & Technology	621	Sociological Practice and Public Sociology	317
<b>Medical</b>	<b>1,036</b>	Ageing	612	Asia/Asian American	313
<b>Organizations, Occupations &amp; Work</b>	<b>1,007</b>	Religion	605	Altruism, Morality & Social Solidarity	307
<b>Race, Gender &amp; Class</b>	<b>930</b>	Sexualities	580	Marxist	307
Racial & Ethnic Minorities	858	Crime, Law & Deviance	576	Mental Health	307
Theory	835	Community & Urban	575	Consumers and Consumption	268
Political Sociology	818	Population	549	Human Rights	266
Comparative & Historical	815	Environment & Technology	487	Peace, War & Social Conflict	256
Collective Behavior/Social Movements	814	Sociology of Development	481	Emotions	252
Inequality, Poverty and Mobility	814	Law	411	Mathematical	214
Family	799	Labor & Labor Movements	409	Rationality & Society	205
Education	772	Methodology	409	Disability & Society	202
Economic	748	Political Economy of the World System	409	History of Sociology	194
Global & Transnational Sociology	713	Latina/o	408	Alcohol & Drugs	171
Teaching & Learning	675	Children & Youth	406	Animals & Society	141
Social Psychology	633	Communication, Information Technologies and Media Sociology	331	Evolution, Biology & Society	136
				Ethnomethodology	129

# Methodological Approaches

- *Quantitative* Research
  - Based on the goal of scientific objectivity and focused on data that can be measured numerically
- *Qualitative* Research
  - Uses interpretive description rather than statistics to analyze underlying meanings and patterns of social relationships



Kendall 2006

# Research Methods

- Surveys
- Secondary data analysis
- Content analysis
- Field research
  - Interviews
  - Participant observation
  - Focus groups
  - Photovoice
- Experiments
- Spatial analysis/GIS





# Structure/Agency

- An important debate in sociology that highlights to what extent an individual's life is determined by social forces
- *Agency*
  - The ability to act independent of structure
- *Structure*
  - Pre-existing social arrangements that shape and constrain behavior



# Social Stratification

The hierarchical arrangement of large social groups based on their control over basic resources (Feagin and Feagin 2003).

Social structural inequality is often based on class, race, gender, age, and other attributes on which society places value.





# Thank You!

Lori Peek, Ph.D.

Colorado State University

Lori.Peek@ColoState.edu

