



Social Class: The Structure of Inequality chapter 7

Coming next...

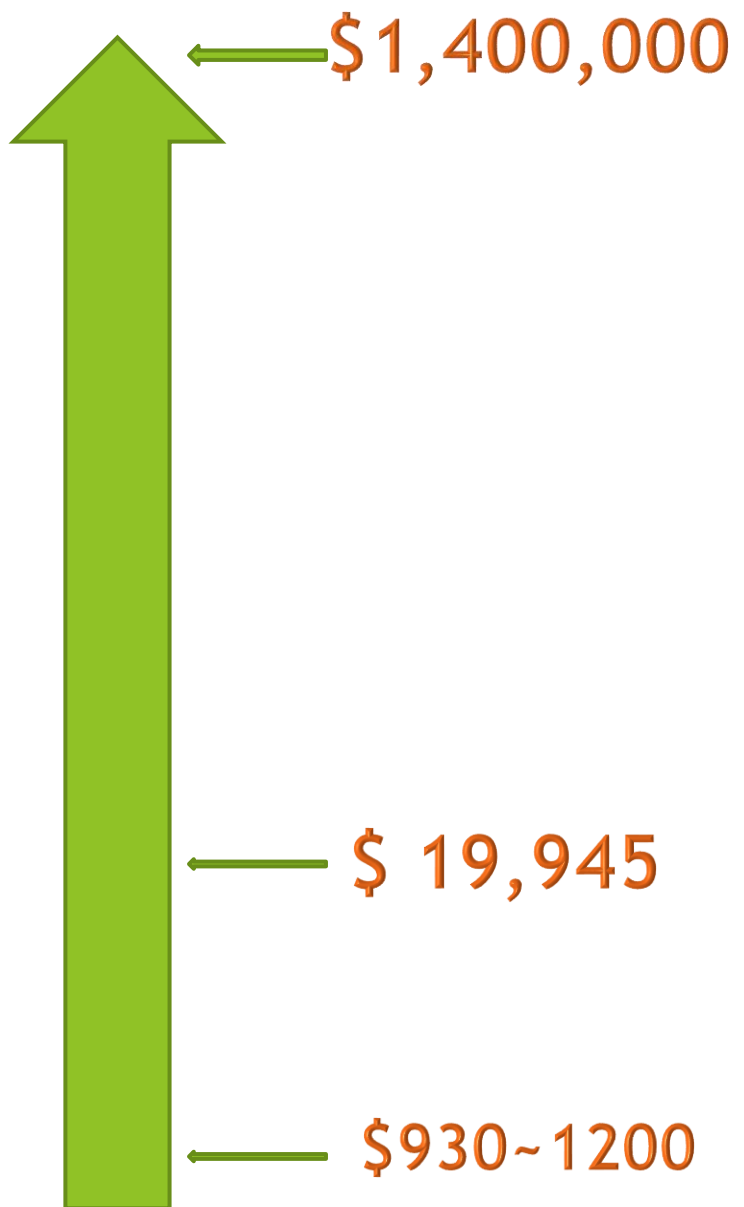
- ▶ Journal # 3 due this Wednesday by midnight
- ▶ Interview project due next Wednesday by midnight
- ▶ This Wednesday's class meet in the library auditorium

Objectives

- ▶ Define Social stratification
- ▶ Illustrate the basic principles of social stratification
- ▶ Explain how America is stratified today
- ▶ Interpret social mobility

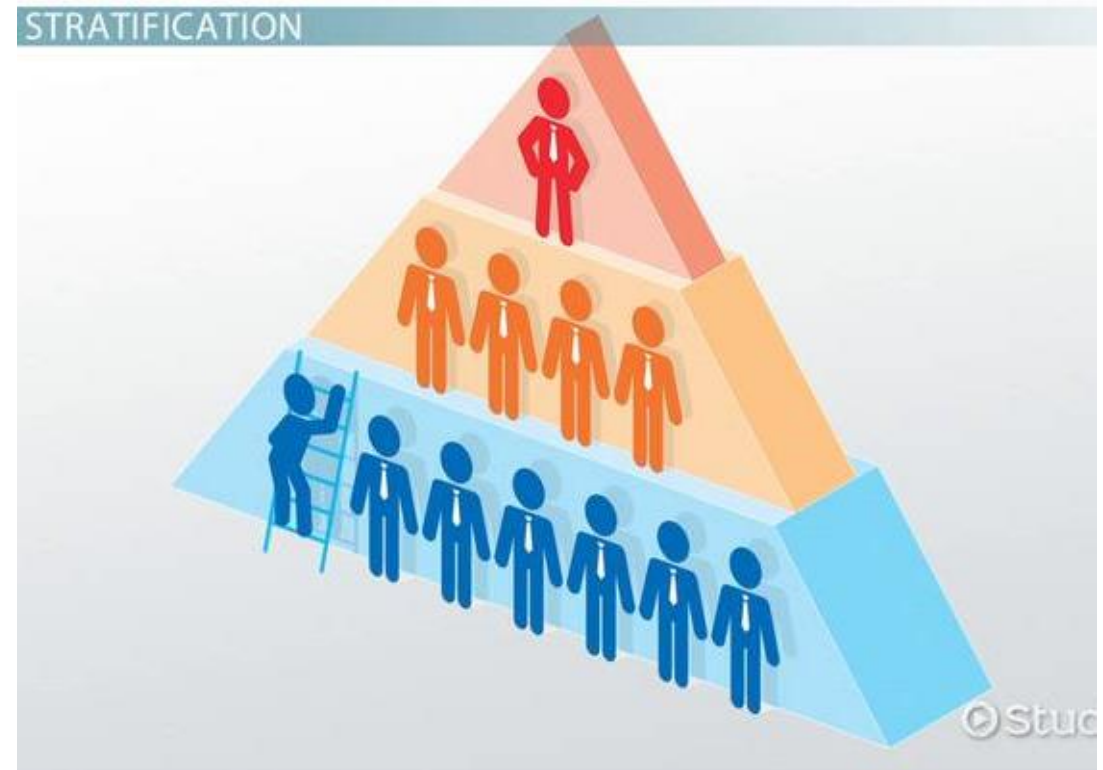
Warm up: *My* consumption practice

- ▶ Pick an object you frequently use - an article of clothing, or your phone, etc. OR service you take advantage of, such as getting your hair cut, or eating out, etc.
- ▶ Research the most and least expensive of this object or service in the world, and provide specific examples.
- ▶ Share with your peers: where do your consumption practices fall in relation to these extremes?



Social Stratification and Social Inequality

- ▶ *Social stratification* is the division of society into groups arranged in a social hierarchy.
 - ▶ Every society has some form of stratification, but different societies stratify people according to a different criteria (including as race, class, and gender).



Basic Principles of Social Stratification

- ▶ It is hierarchical: Social inequality is the unequal distribution of wealth, power, or prestige among members of a society.
- ▶ It is systematic: not just individual story
- ▶ it persists over generations
- ▶ is maintained through beliefs that members of society widely share


Systems of Stratification

- ▶ **Slavery** is the most extreme form of social stratification and is based on the legal ownership of people.
- ▶ **Caste system** is a form of social stratification in which status is determined by one's family history and background and cannot be changed.
- ▶ **Social class**

Systems of Stratification: Social Class

- ▶ ***Social class***: a system of stratification based on access to resources such as wealth, property, power, and prestige.
 - ▶ Sociologists often refer to social class as ***socioeconomic status (SES)***.
- ▶ ***Intersectionality***: a concept that identifies how different categories of inequality (e.g., class, race, and gender) intersect

The U.S. Social Class Ladder



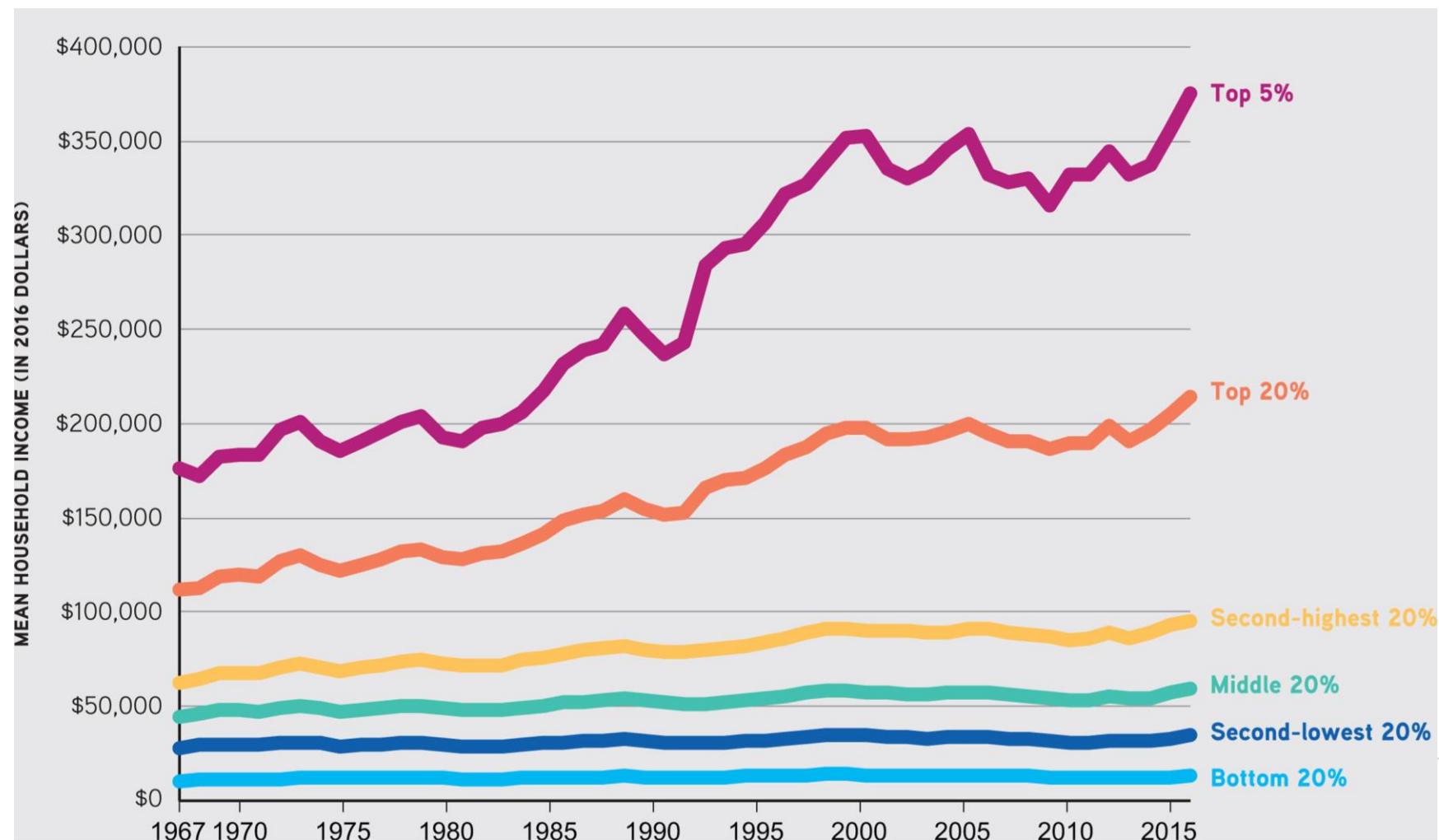
CLASS	Percentage of Population	Typical Household Incomes	Typical Occupations	Typical Education
UPPER CLASS	1%	\$2 million	Investors, heirs, executives, media/sports personalities	Some prestigious university degrees
UPPER-MIDDLE CLASS	14%	\$150,000	Professionals and managers	College and university degrees, some graduate degrees
MIDDLE CLASS	30%	\$70,000	Semi-professionals, lower-level managers, white collar and highly skilled blue collar jobs	Two- and four-year college degrees
WORKING (LOWER-MIDDLE) CLASS	30%	\$40,000	Semiskilled labor, service, manual, and clerical jobs	High school degrees
WORKING POOR	13%	\$25,000	Low and unskilled workers, lower-paid manual and service jobs, seasonal work	Some high school
UNDERCLASS	12%	\$15,000	Seldom employed or unemployed, part-time labor, many rely on public or private assistance	Some high school

SOURCE: Gilbert 2014.

Theories of Social Class: Conflict Theory

- ▶ Karl Marx believed that there were two main social classes in capitalist societies.
 - ▶ Capitalists (or the bourgeoisie) owned the means of production.
 - ▶ Workers (or the proletariat) sold their labor for wages.
- ▶ Marx believed that the classes would remain divided and social inequality would grow.

Mean Household Income by Income Group, 1967-2015



Source: Semega, Fontenot, and Kollar 2017. From Giddens et al, p200.

Question:
How bad is the wealth inequality in America?



Theories of Social Class: Weberian Theory

- ▶ Max Weber offered a similar model that also included cultural factors.
- ▶ He argued that class status was made of three components.
 - ▶ **Wealth** (or privilege) is a measure of net worth that includes income, property, and other assets.
 - ▶ Power is the ability to impose one's will on others.
 - ▶ **Prestige** is the social honor people are given because of their membership in well-regarded social groups.

TABLE 7.1 The Relative Social Prestige of Selected Occupations in the United States

White-Collar Occupationst	Prestige Score	Blue-Collar Occupations
Physician	86	
Lawyer	75	
Professor	74	
Architect	73	
Dentist	72	
Member of the Clergy	69	
Pharmacist	68	
Registered Nurse	66	
	65	Athlete
Electrical Engineer	64	
Veterinarian	62	
Airplane Pilot	61	
Sociologist	61	
	60	Police Officer
Actor	58	

White-Collar Occupationst	Prestige Score	Blue-Collar Occupations
Actor	58	
	53	Firefighter
Social Worker	52	
	51	Electrician
	46	Secretary
	40	Farmer
	36	Child-Care Worker
	36	Hairdresser
	31	Auto-Body Repairperson
Cashier	29	
	28	Waiter/Waitress
	22	Janitor

SOURCE: National Opinion Research Center 2015

Theories of Social Class: Structural Functionalism

- ▶ Structural functionalism suggests that the system of stratification that has emerged is functional to society in many ways.
 - ▶ Certain roles are more important for the functioning of society and these roles may be more difficult to fill, so more incentive is needed.
 - ▶ Greater rewards are necessary for work that requires more training or skill.

Theories of Social Class: Symbolic Interactionism

- ▶ Symbolic interactionists examine the way in which we use status differences to categorize ourselves and others.
- ▶ As Erving Goffman pointed out, our clothing, speech, gestures, possessions, friends, activities, and so on provide information about our socioeconomic status.

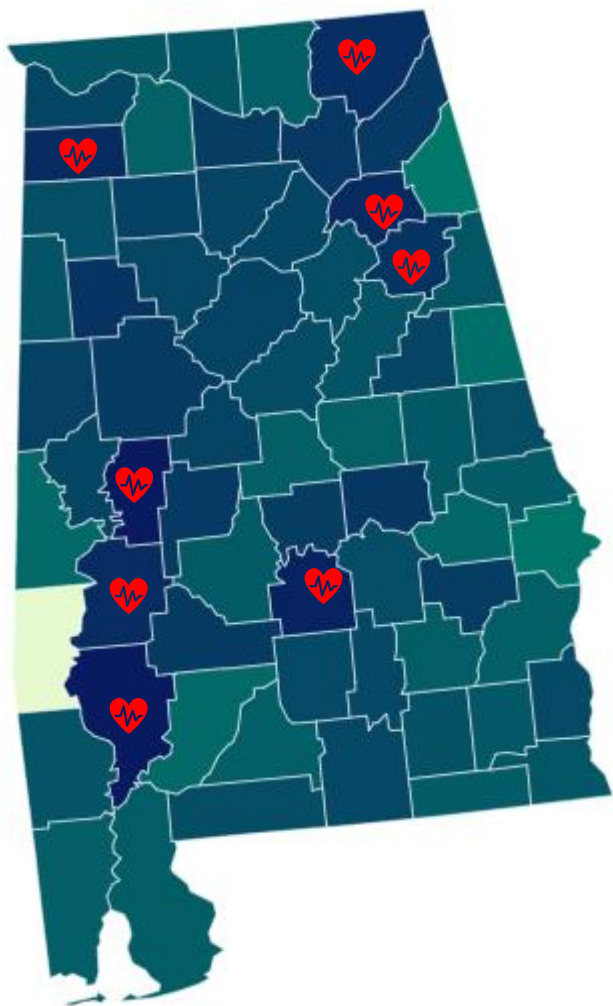
Symbols of “First Class”



Socioeconomic Status and Life Chances

- ▶ Belonging to a certain social class has profound consequences for individuals in all areas of life, including family, health, education, work and income, and criminal justice.

COVID Death per 100k in Alabama Counties (as of 04/02/2021)



Percentage of population living in poverty

Franklin County: 20.1%

Jackson County: 17.5%

Etowah County: 17.5%

Calhoun County: 17.1%

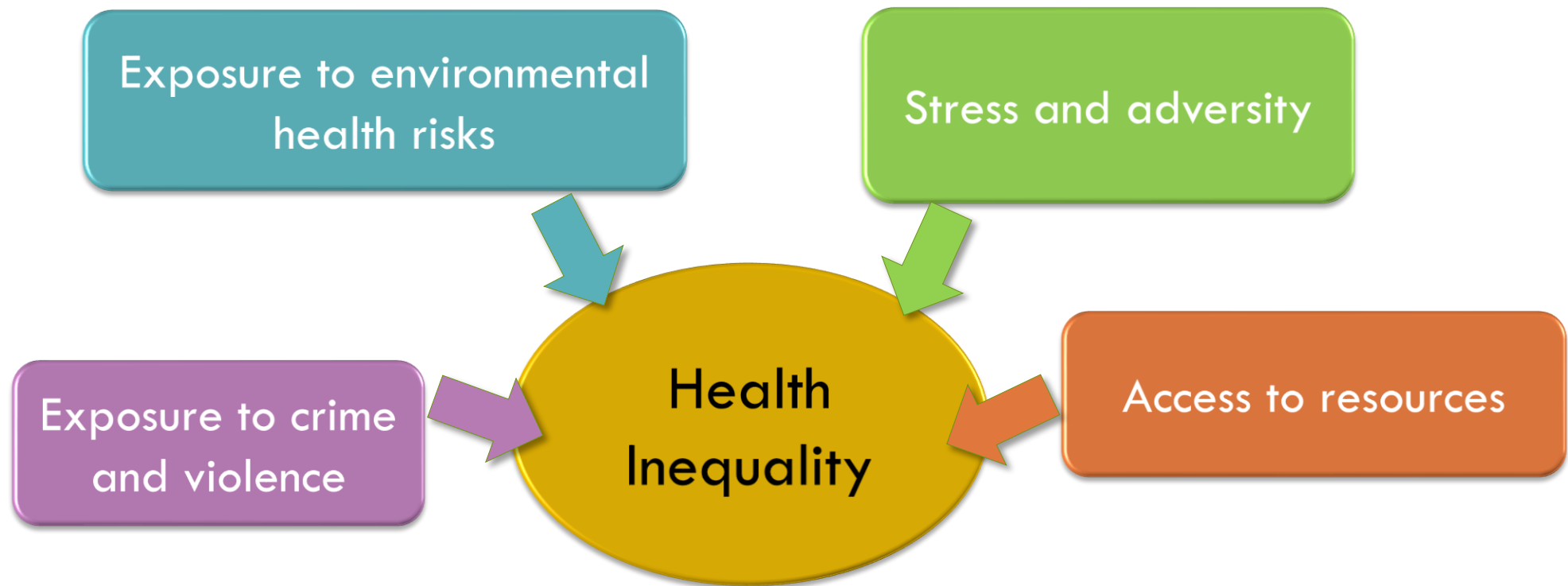
Hale County: 23.7%


Clarke County: 29.0%

Lowndes County: 31.7%

State of Alabama: 16.8%

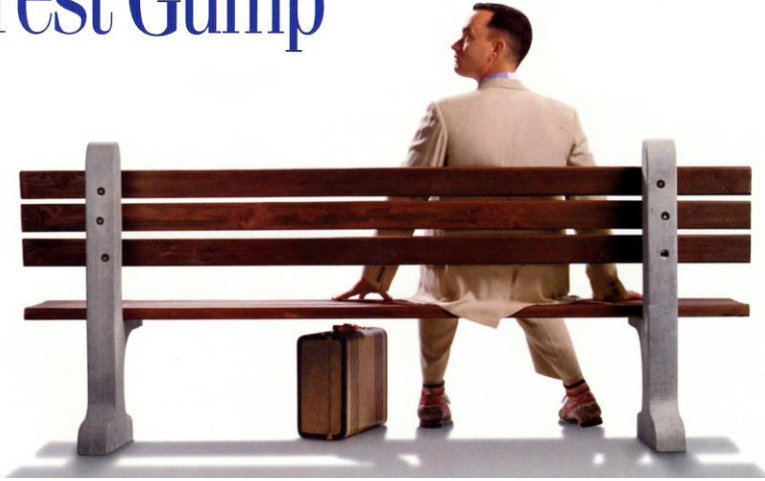
Socioeconomic Status and Health Inequality



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- A soccer ball is shown hitting a goal net. The net is made of white hexagonal mesh. The background is a blurred green field. A horizontal bar with a teal segment on the left and a green segment on the right is at the top of the slide.
- ❑ Stay in your seat.
 - ❑ Follow the instructions.
 - ❑ Write down your name on a piece of paper
 - ❑ Place the paper into the box.
 - ❑ The most colorful page in the box will win!

Activity:
Goal! Goal! Goal!

Forrest Gump



Social Mobility





Discussion:
How to move upward?

Recap Quiz

Which one of the following is TRUE about social stratification

- ▶ A. It is a trait of society that reflects individual difference
- ▶ B. All societies are stratified in the same system
- ▶ C. Due to the inequality and hierarchy in society, social mobility is often difficult
- ▶ D. We can't make general prediction about people's life chances based on social classes

Correct answer: C