

**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LESOTHO**  
**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES**  
**COMMUNICATION AND STUDY SKILLS UNIT**

**ELG 1315 COMMUNICATION AND ACADEMIC LITERACY FOR SOCIAL  
SCIENCES**

**JANUARY 2024**

**MARKS: 100**

**TIME: 3 HOURS**

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**INSTRUCTIONS:**

- **ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS**
- **PLEASE NOTE THAT THE PAPER HAS TWO QUESTIONS:**
  - 1- ESSAY WRITING**
  - 2- READING COMPREHENSION**
- **BEGIN EACH QUESTION ON A FRESH PAGE**
- **WRITE YOUR STUDENT NUMBER AND GROUP CLEARLY**
- **WRITE LEGIBLY**

**QUESTION 1: ESSAY WRITING**

Read the passages below and use information from them to write a descriptive essay on the following title: [60]

*The economics of social stratification*

**Guidelines:**

- Length of the essay- 1½-2 pages excluding bibliography
- Include a maximum of 2 direct quotations and 4 or more indirect quotations
- Marks will be awarded for the following:
  - Appropriate content
  - Correct grammar
  - Academic style

- Good paragraphing
- Quoting and bibliographic skills

## **Passage 1**

### **Stratification**

‘Stratification’ is a term used to characterise a structure of inequality where (a) individuals occupy differentiated structural positions and (b) the positions are situated in layers (or strata) that are ranked hierarchically according to broadly recognised standards. The implied reference to sedimentary layers from geology reflects the relative permanence of the posited structure and the long history that is assumed to have generated it. Stratification researchers focus primarily on the empirical study of (a) the sources of the rankings that generate the hierarchy of strata, (b) the mobility of individuals between strata, and (c) the mechanisms of integration that allow societies to cope with the existence of persistent inequalities between strata.

In his essay ‘An analytical approach to the theory of social stratification’, Parsons (1940, p. 841) wrote: ‘Social stratification is regarded here as the differential ranking of the human individuals who compose a given social system and their treatment as superior and inferior relative to one another in certain socially important respects.’ Parsons (1940, p. 849) then wrote that the ‘status of any given individual in the system of stratification in a society may be regarded as a resultant of the common valuations underlying the attribution of status to him’ in dimensions such as achievements, possessions, authority, and power.

Like sociologists, economists have begun to focus on categorical representations of the structure of inequality, examining placement within the distribution of earnings and wealth (using either fixed categories across generations or relative ranks within distributions). When analysed as cross-classifications of quantiles, these methods are similar in spirit and method to the between-social-class mobility studies of sociology. In fact, Björklund and Jäntti (1997) refer to income groups as income classes and reference the log-linear tradition of mobility research in sociology. Economists have also become interested in the extent to which increasing inequalities within the labour

markets of industrialised countries between the 1970s and the 1990s can be seen as less consequential to the extent that they have been accompanied by increasing chances of intergenerational mobility (see Welch, 1999). Relatedly, some economists have sought to determine the extent to which increasing chances of upward mobility sustained support for the market reforms in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union that increased inequality (see Birdsall and Graham, 2000). This work is reminiscent of the concern with societal integration that is most closely associated with Parsons in sociology, and it may represent a shared territory which both sociologists and economists will further cultivate.

**Source:** Uncorrected proof from the New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. ‘Stratification’. Published by Palgrave Macmillan. Forthcoming. Edited by Thabo Mohale and Liao Ncheke, 2019

## **Passage 2**

### **Third Worlds Workers: Comparative International Labour Studies**

In modern Western societies, social stratification is defined in terms of three social classes: an upper class, a middle class and a lower class; in turn, each class can be subdivided into an upper-stratum, a middle-stratum and a lower stratum. Moreover, a social stratum can be formed on the basis of kinship, clan, tribe, caste, or on all four.

An upper class in modern societies is the social class composed of people who hold the highest social status; usually these are the wealthiest members of a class society, and wield the greatest political power. According to this view, the upper class is generally distinguished by an immense wealth which is passed on from generation to generation. Prior to the 20th century, the emphasis was on aristocracy, which emphasised generations of an inherited noble status, not just recent wealth.

Because the upper classes of a society may no longer rule the society in which they are living, they are often referred to as the old upper classes, and they are often culturally distinct from the newly rich middle classes that tend to dominate public life in modern social democracies.

The middle class refers to a class of people in the middle of a social hierarchy, often defined by occupation, income, education or social status. The term has historically been associated with

modernity, capitalism and political debate. Common definitions for the middle class range from the middle fifth of individuals on a nation's income ladder to everyone, but the poorest and wealthiest 20%. Theories like "Paradox of Interest" use decile groups and wealth distribution data to determine the size and wealth share of the middle class.

The lower class, also known as the working class, includes all employees who are compensated with wage or salary-based contracts. Working-class occupations (see also "designation of workers by collar colour") include blue-collar jobs, and most pink-collar jobs. Members of the working class rely exclusively upon earnings from wage labour; thus, according to more inclusive definitions, the category can include almost all of the working population of industrialised economies, as well as those employed in the urban areas (cities, towns, villages) of non-industrialised economies or in the rural workforce.

**Source:** 1988, page 30, *Third Worlds Workers: Comparative International Labour Studies*. CapeTown, International Studies in Sociology and Social Anthropology. Longman Publishers, Palesa Letsoalo

### **Passage 3**

#### **Economic Stratification**

Economic stratification refers to the condition within a society where social classes are separated, or stratified, along economic lines. Various economic strata or levels are clearly manifest. While in any system individual members will have varying degrees of wealth, economic stratification typically refers to the condition where there are meaningful gaps between the wealth controlled by various groups, and few instances in the transitional regions.

Social connectedness to people of higher income levels is a strong predictor of upward income mobility. However, data show substantial social segregation correlating with economic income groups.

Weber (1949:89) points out three main dimensions of social stratification: 1] economic class, 2] social status, 3] political power or party. Each of these dimensions has a characteristic that separates or differs from other dimensions. The economic class is concerned with the income

earned and the possession of goods and services; the economic class deals with monetary classification.

An economic class includes such property as land, buildings, farms, houses and factories, everything related to the monetary and economic situation and class. This dimension of social stratification, to a very great extent, is about the monetary power that one can be imbued with. The more financial assets, the higher is the economic class or recognition.

Economic class and power is depicted with the economic class of an individual in a market. The number of assets or financial capital that an individual comprises determines their class. This classification exists because of the unequal distribution of the material as explained by Weber. Thus, if someone already has or owns what you need or desire, then they come to a dominant position; a classic example of this is an employer-employee relationship.

There are many ways you can tell what a person's stratification is just by the way they look or the things they have. Usually, this ranking goes from the lower to the middle class, then to the upper class. Each of these classes has very different ways of living and what they do to maintain a certain status.

**Source:** Lerato Moseneke and Rethabile Makhetha. Economic Stratification. Pages 63–90, Issue 3, Journal of Economic Perspectives volume 12. 1998.

## QUESTION 2: COMPREHENSION PASSAGE

Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow.

(40)

### Social Sciences in a Changing World

1-On September 11, 2001, eighteen men boarded airplanes with the intent of crashing them into the World Trade Centre, the Pentagon, and the White House or Capitol. They succeeded with three of the planes, causing enormous destruction. What forces drove the hijackers to undertake such an action? What forces led the passengers to organise together to thwart them? What might have prevented the high jackings? Such questions fall under the purview of social science - the scientific study of social, cultural, psychological, economic, and political forces that guide individuals in their actions.

2-Formal social science is *relatively* new. Nevertheless, a vast amount of information has been accumulated concerning the social life of human beings. This information has been used in building a system of knowledge about the nature, growth and functioning of human societies. Social science is the name given to that system of knowledge. All knowledge is (1) knowledge of human beings, including their culture and products, and (2) knowledge of natural environment. Human culture has been changing, and knowledge about it has been gradually accumulating ever since the far distant time when humans first assumed their distinctively human character. But until rather recent times, this knowledge was not scientific in the modern sense. Scientific knowledge is knowledge that has been systematically gathered, classified, related, and interpreted. It is concerned with learning the concepts and applying those concepts to particulars, rather than just learning a vast amount of information.

3-Ancient people acquired much of their knowledge unconsciously, just as human beings today still begin the use of their native languages and acquire many of the basic elements in their cultures unconsciously. For the most part, ancient human beings accepted the world as they found it, and if any explanations seemed called for, they invented supernatural ones. Some ancient people believed that every stream, tree, and rock contained a spirit that controlled its behaviour. In modern times, the emphasis is on the search for scientific knowledge. The human knowledge has been divided into a number of areas and fields, and every science represents the systematic collection and study of data in one of these areas, which can be grouped roughly into two major fields: social

science and natural science. Each of these fields is subdivided into a number of specialised sciences or disciplines to facilitate more intensive study and deeper understanding. Social science is the field of human knowledge that deals with all aspects of the group life of human beings. Natural sciences are concerned with the natural environment in which human beings exist. Natural sciences include physics and chemistry, which deal with the laws of matter, motion, space, mass and energy. There are also biological sciences, which deal with living things.

4-The third field of study is that of the humanities, which deals with literature, music, art and philosophy. The humanities are closely related to social science in that both deal with humans and their culture. Social sciences, however, is mostly concerned with those **basic** elements of culture that determine the general patterns of human behaviour. The humanities deal with special aspects of human culture and are primarily concerned with attempts to express spiritual and **aesthetic** values and to discover the meaning of life.

5-The importance of social science goes far beyond the specific social sciences. It is social science thinking that **underlies** much of the law as well as the understanding of international relations and government. All these fields are the natural **by-products** of a social science inquiry. Thus, a knowledge of social science is necessary for anyone trying to understand current world events.

## Questions

### From paragraph 1

- a. According to the author, what is the focus of social sciences? (4)
- b. Mention any *three* social science disciplines which you are familiar with and their specific focus. (6)

### From paragraph 2

- c. The author describes formal social sciences as *relatively new*. Suggest the reason for the use of the expression *relatively*. (4)
- d. Which type of social science is not new? (2)
- e. Have human beings always had their human character? Justify your answer. (4).

### From paragraph 3

- f. How did ancient human beings gain much of their knowledge? (3)
- g. State any major drawback of the method used by ancient human beings to gain much of their knowledge. (2)
- h. How did ancient human beings explain the phenomena they did not understand? (4)
- i. How are the social sciences similar to the humanities? (3)

**From paragraphs 4 and 5**

- j.** In a **word** or a **phrase of not more than seven words**, explain each of the following words as used in the passage:
  - i.** basic
  - ii.** aesthetic
  - iii.** underlies
  - iv.** by-products (8)