

SOC 347

CHARON, CHAPTER 4

**WHY ARE PEOPLE UNEQUAL IN  
SOCIETY?**

# Learning Objectives

- Sources of human inequality
- Effects of division of labor
- Social stratification
- Social conflict and social power
- Privilege, prestige, and social power
- Culture, socialization and force

# Unequal

- Nature of society--inequality/injustice
- Social interaction
- Individual qualities
- Comparisons on social qualities

# WHY INEQUALITY EMERGES?

- Economic division of labor
- Leadership
- Conquest
- Bureaucracy
- Social Conflict
- Power
- Private property
- Privilege & Prestige

# WHY DOES INEQUALITY CONTINUE?

- Through efforts of the powerful
- Social institutions
- Culture
- Socialization
- Instruments of force

# Efforts of the Powerful

- Use resources to protect positions
- Ruling class—mostly from the rich class
- Elite influences government, media, schools, military, police, courts,
- Leaders regard their positions as “theirs”

# Social Institutions

- Institutions legitimize ways of doing things
- Social procedures mostly benefit the rich
- Institutions work to protect the system of inequality
- Tax system--greater inequality
- Consensus of the ideas of the powerful

# Culture

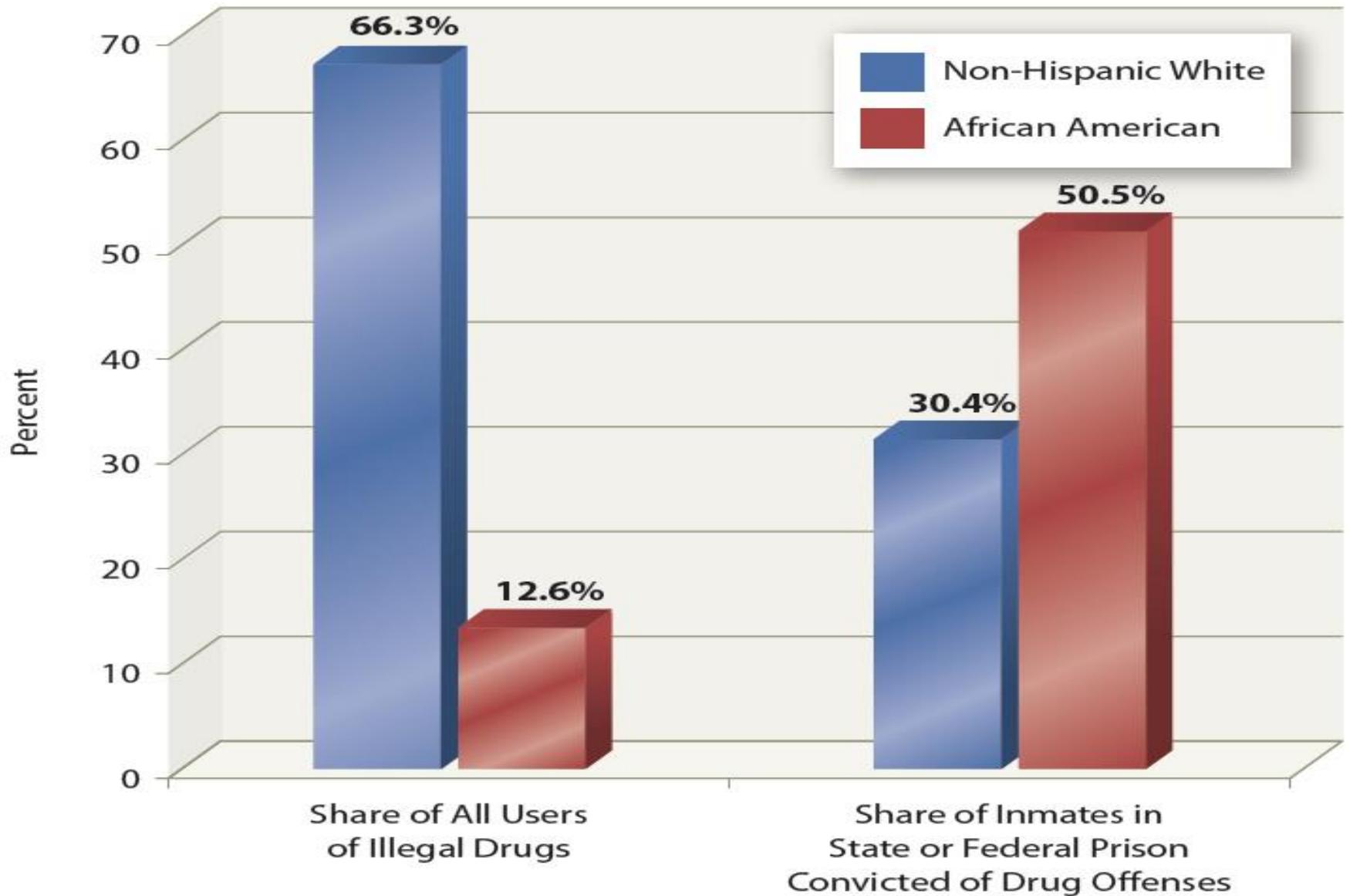
- Culture—a conservative force
- Poor become conservative—in beliefs\*
- Provides justifications for inequality
- That upper class is superior
- Poverty is laziness, sin, and irresponsibility
- Inequality seen as God's will
- Ideas not consistent with elite—opposed

# Socialization

- To be satisfied with our lot/place
- Women/minorities to accept subordinate positions
- (Why words like: “minority” to describe human beings?)
- To obey people who “represent” us
- To accept inequality as morally right
- Some refuse, overcome & succeed

# Instruments of Force

- CRJ system works to protect inequality
- Free speech--but no acting to alter the system
- Groups that threaten established order--controlled by force
- Violence and threats are the last resort



Sources: U.S. Department of Justice (2011) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2012)

# The End Result

- Few rich/Majority poor
- Few powerful/Majority powerless
- Tiny upper class controls resources
- Permanent poor class
- Laws, ideas, customs, institutions control, intimidate, exploit the masses

# Advantages for Leaders

- More information
- The right to make decisions
- Capacity to control others
- Elitist and separatist
- Selfishness--hold unto positions
- Followers unable to critique
- Positions become powerful
- “Iron law of oligarchy”—rule of the few (whether in democracy or dictatorship)