

Table 2.4 Summary of sociological perspectives: Inequalities based on social class

	Functionalist	Conflict/Feminist	Interactionist
Explanations of social class and poverty	<p>Inequality is inevitable and emerges from the social structure.</p> <p>Poverty serves a social function.</p>	<p>Inequality is systematically maintained by those trying to preserve their class advantage.</p> <p>Class is based on multiple dimensions—income, wealth, prestige, and power.</p> <p>Welfare bureaucracies represent important interest groups that influence the creation and implementation of welfare policies.</p>	<p>Each social class has a specific set of norms, values, and beliefs.</p> <p>Poverty is a learned phenomenon based on a “culture of poverty” that encourages and perpetuates poverty.</p> <p>The public’s perception of the welfare system and of welfare recipients is shaped by the media, political groups, and stereotypes.</p>
Questions asked about social class and poverty	<p>What are the functions and dysfunctions of inequality?</p> <p>What portions of society benefit from poverty?</p>	<p>What powerful interest groups determine class inequalities?</p> <p>How do our welfare policies reflect specific political, economic, and social interest groups?</p>	<p>Is poverty learned behavior?</p> <p>How are our perceptions of the poor determined by the media, news reports, and politicians?</p> <p>Has society created two images—the deserving versus the undeserving poor?</p> <p>Are these images accurate?</p>