

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

Soc 1101: Summer 2023

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Social Class and Social Mobility

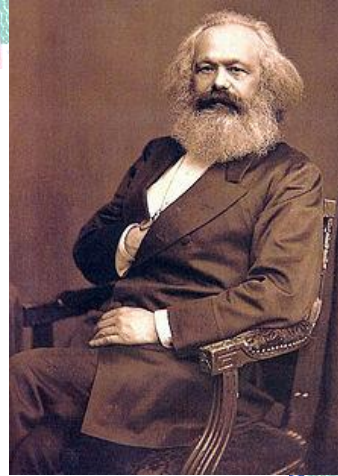
Lecture 7

TODAY'S LECTURE OUTLINE

- **Social Class**
 - **Classic theories: revisit Marx; consider Weber**
 - **Measurement**
 - **Lareau: Class differences in childrearing**
- **Social Mobility**
 - **Concepts**
 - **Facts**
- **Next Monday: Race, Racism & Colonialism**

MARX AND ENGELS 1848

- **"We find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank."**
- **"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."**
- **Freeman and slave,... lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed..."(Lemert 2013, 34)**



THEORIES OF CLASS

Marx

- **Classes defined by their connection to means of production**
 - **Bourgeoisie (owners)**
 - **Proletariat (workers)**
- **Fundamental social change is the product of class conflict**

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Weber

- **Social class linked to life chances**
- **Class versus Status**
 - **Class based on economic resources**
 - **Status based on social prestige**
- **Position in stratification: a function of class, status, and political power**



**Nothing but bad
debts hidden by a
good name**



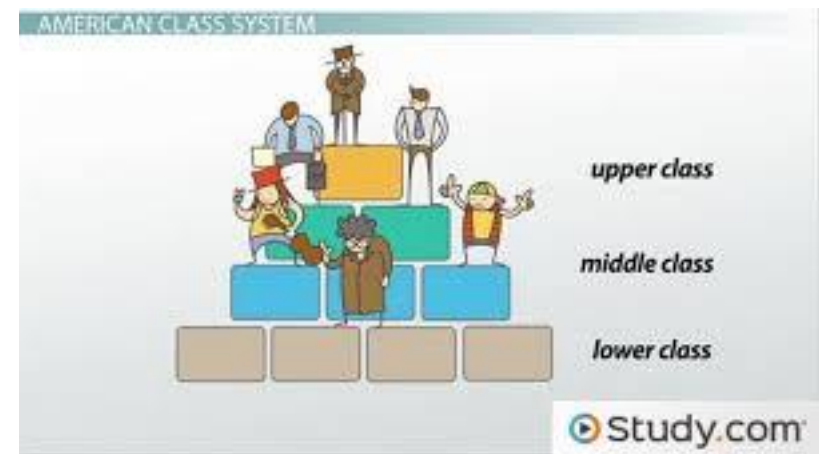
**Nouveau
riche**

SOCIAL CLASS AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

- **Social class (in the US)**
 - **Ranked categories based on some combo of income, wealth, education and occupation**
 - **Fluid system of social stratification**
- **Social mobility**
 - **The ability of individuals to move between and within social class positions during a lifetime (intra) *or* from one generation to the next (inter)**

SOCIAL CLASS, THREE WAYS

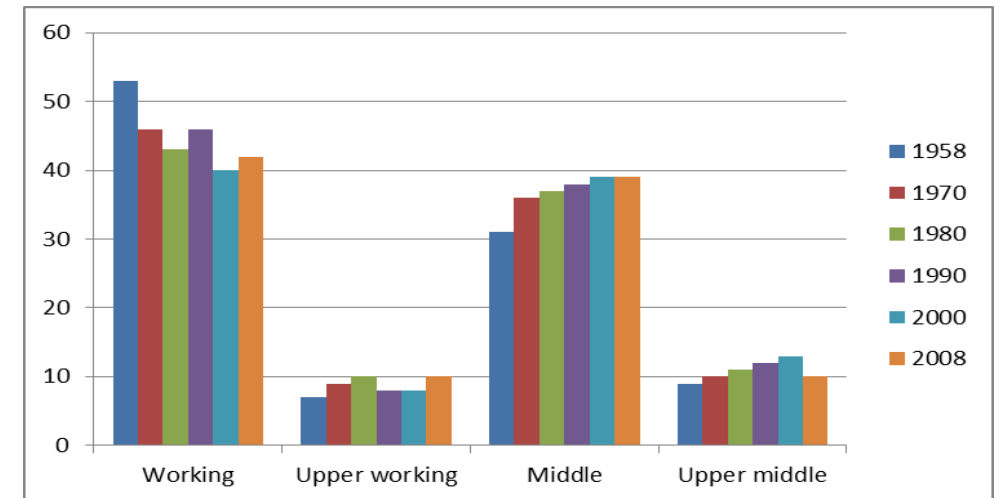
- **Ranked categories based on some combo of income, wealth, education and occupation**
 - But boundaries are not sharply defined
- **Three ways sociologists measure class**
 - **Subjective**
 - **Reputational**
 - **Objective**



SUBJECTIVE

- Self-placement
- Ask people which class they think they belong to

"Most people say they belong either to the middle class or the working class. Do you ever think of yourself as belonging in one of these classes?"

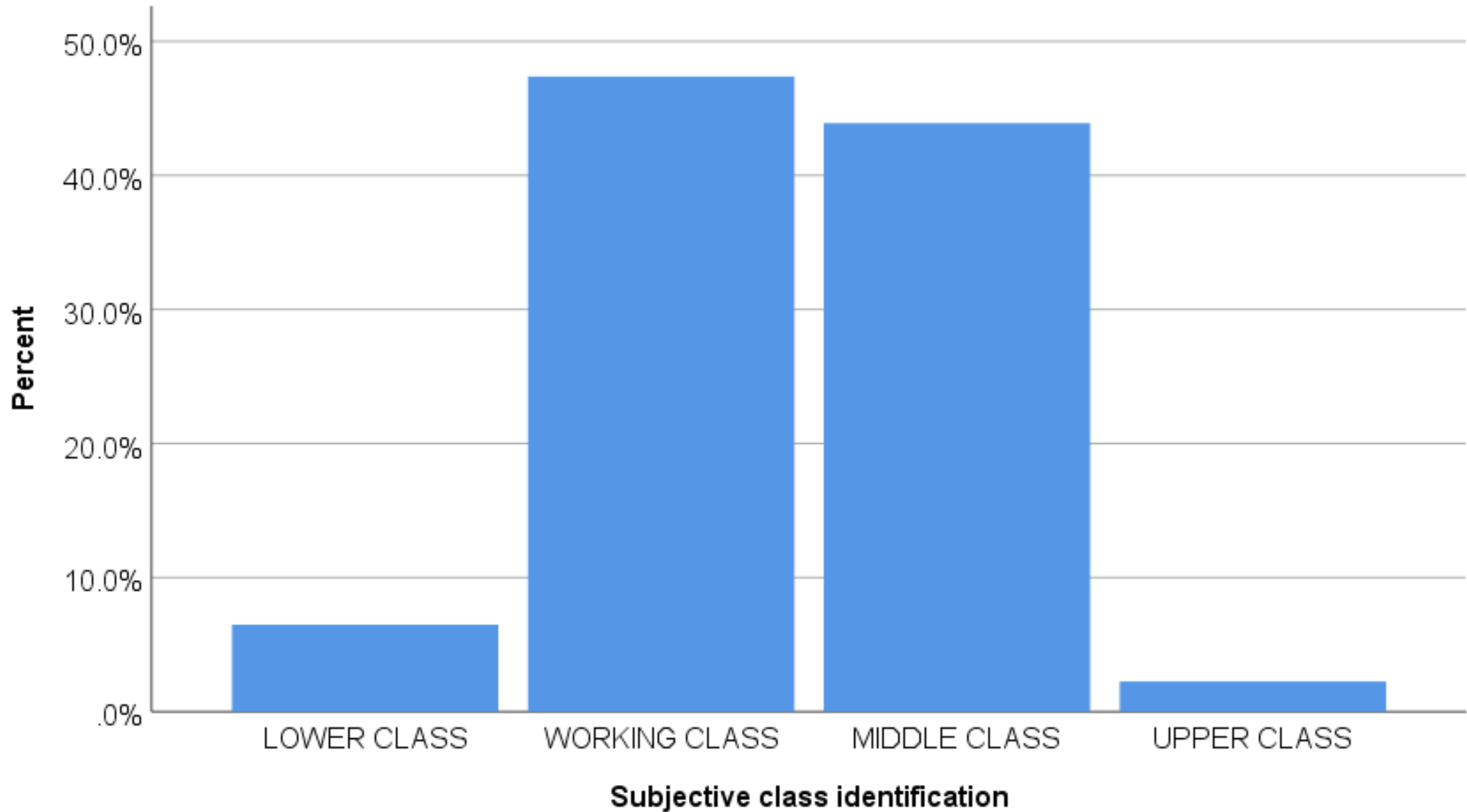


Source: [American National Election Study](#)

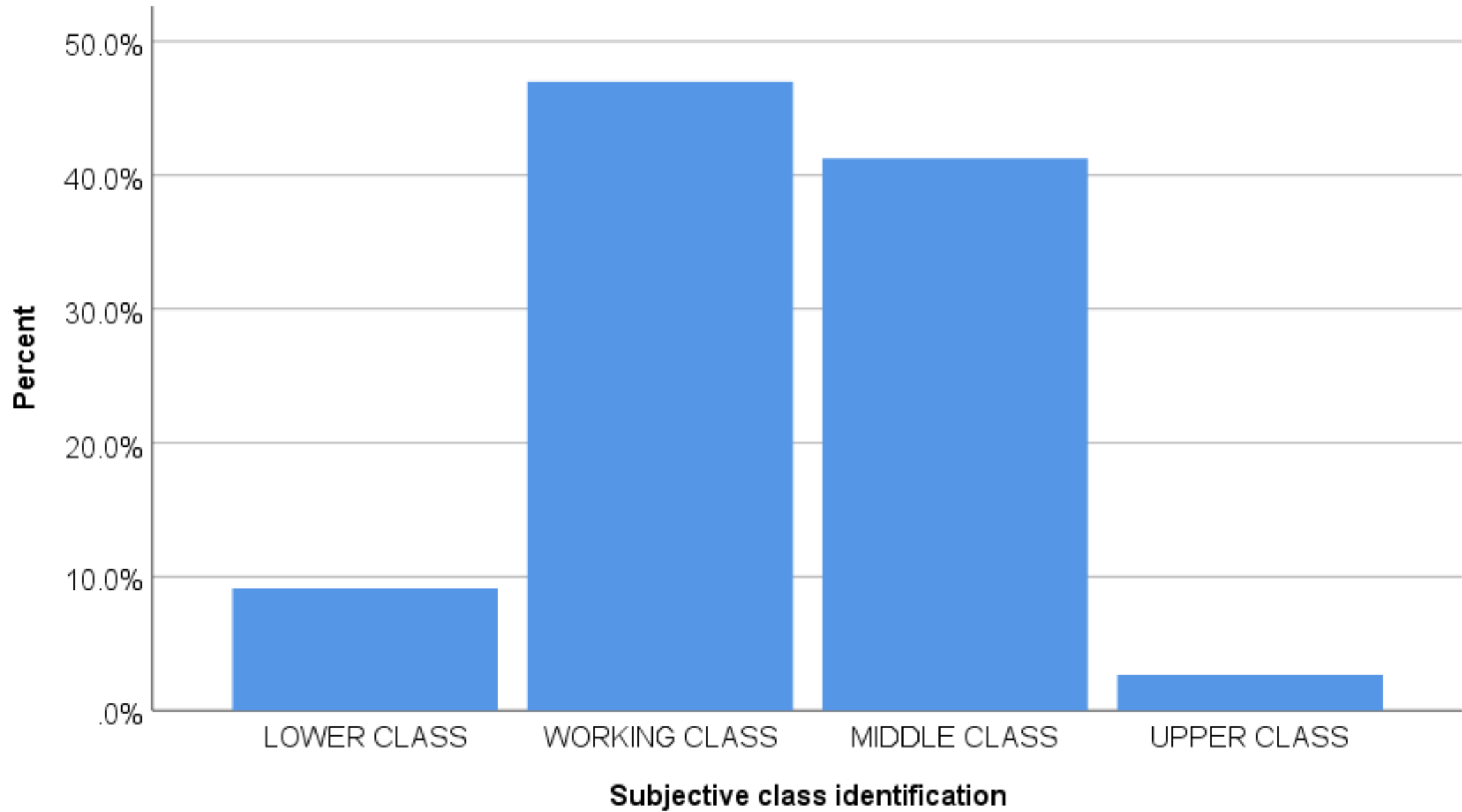
If you were asked to use one of four names for your social class, which would you say you belong in:

- A) the lower class**
- B) the working class**
- C) the middle class, or**
- D) the upper class?**

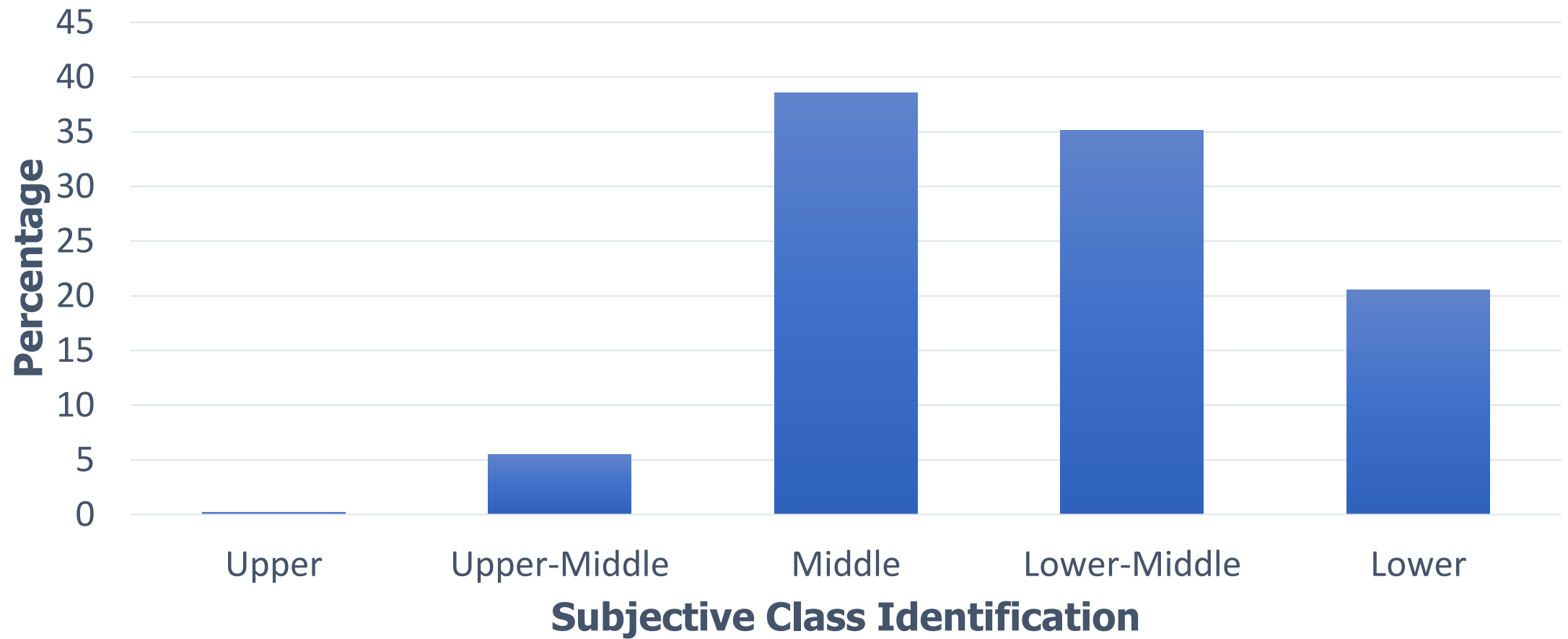
1972 General Social Survey (GSS)



2016 General Social Survey (GSS)



2018 Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS)



REPUTATIONAL

- **Ask well-informed “judges” to rank or classify citizens into occupational groups**
 - **This method uses prestige measures as a way to rank positions**
 - **Prestige classes are based on an occupation’s respect, social honor, favorable regard or importance within society**
 - **Example:**
 - **Lawyer vs. teacher vs. welder vs. garbage collector**

Table 2.3 NORC Prestige Scores for Selected Occupations

Higher Prestige Jobs		Medium Prestige Jobs		Lower Prestige Jobs	
Job	Score	Job	Score	Job	Score
Physician	86	Policeman	59	Barber	36
Lawyer	75	Construction superintendent	57	File clerk	36
College professor	74	Airplane mechanic	53	Assembly-line worker	35
Computer systems analyst	74	Electrician	51	House painter	34
Chemist	73	Computer operator	50	Cashier in supermarket	33
Dentist	72	Manager of a supermarket	48	Bus driver	32
Hospital administrator	69	Secretary	46	Furniture salesperson	31
Registered nurse	66	Bookkeeper	46	Carpenter's helper	30

OBJECTIVE

- **Ask people facts about themselves and use this information to categorize them into classes**
 - **Most common measure is socioeconomic status (SES), based on three independent but related components**
 - **education**
 - **occupation**
 - **income**

Education

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Occupation

What kind of work do you normally do?
That is, what is your job called?

Income

How much did you earn from your job?



- Education: 4-year college
- Occupation: Writer
- Income: \$80,000

What social class best fits this person?

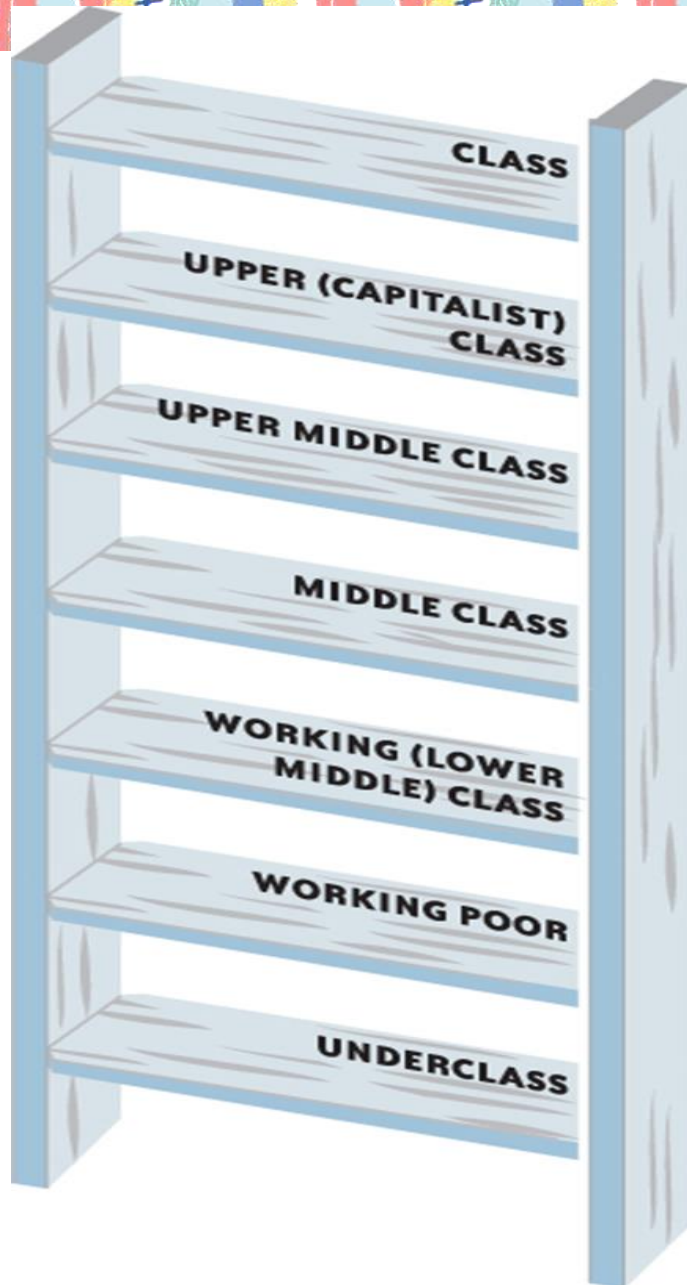
- A) lower class
- B) working class
- C) middle class
- D) upper class?



- Education: High school
- Occupation: Nuclear technician
- Income: \$37,000

What social class best fits this person?

- A) lower class
- B) working class
- C) middle class
- D) upper class?



Percentage of Population	Typical Household Incomes	Typical Occupations	Typical Education
1%	More than \$250,000	Investors, heirs, executives, media/sports personalities	Some prestigious university degrees
14%	\$89,000 to more than \$150,000	Professionals and managers	College and university degrees, some graduate degrees
30%	\$55,000 to \$88,000	Semi-professionals, lower-level managers, whitecollar and highly-skilled blue collar jobs	2- and 4-year college degrees
30%	\$23,000 to \$54,000	Semi-skilled labor, service, manual and clerical jobs	High school degrees
20%	Less than \$10,500 to \$22,000	Low and unskilled workers, lower-paid manual and service jobs, seasonal work	Some high school
5%	Less than \$7,500	Seldom or unemployed, part-time labor, many rely on public or private assistance	Some high school

CLASS DIFFERENCES IN CHILDBREARING

- **Cultural explanations of how social (dis)advantage is transmitted from parent to child**
 - **Ethnography and in-depth interviews**
- **Social class creates distinctive parenting styles**
- **Middle class parents exercise “concerted cultivation”**
- **Working class parents emphasize “accomplishment of natural growth”**

MC: CONCERTED CULTIVATION

- **What does this look like?**
 - **Organized activities – soccer, piano, gymnastics, music**
 - **Development of child's "special talents"**
 - **Child performance is valued and praised**
 - **Language use; development of reasoning**
 - **Proactive involvement with institutional authorities (teachers, doctors)**
- **What is the result?**
 - **Emerging sense of entitlement in children**

WC: ACCOMPLISHMENT OF NATURAL GROWTH

- **What does this look like?**
 - **Fewer organized activities; more free/unstructured play**
 - **More time with extended family (richer, deeper ties)**
 - **Directives and less talking**
 - **Deferential to and less involvement with authority**
 - **More likely to use physical discipline**
- **What is the result?**
 - **Emerging sense of constraint in children**

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

- **Dominant society privileges the behaviors and skills cultivated by middle class parents**
 - **Rewards (e.g. income) and opportunities (e.g. education) are differentially linked to these ways of upbringing**
- **This creates a cycle of disadvantage/inequality**
 - **Not based on ability/talent but on characteristics of birth**

SOCIAL MOBILITY IN AMERICA

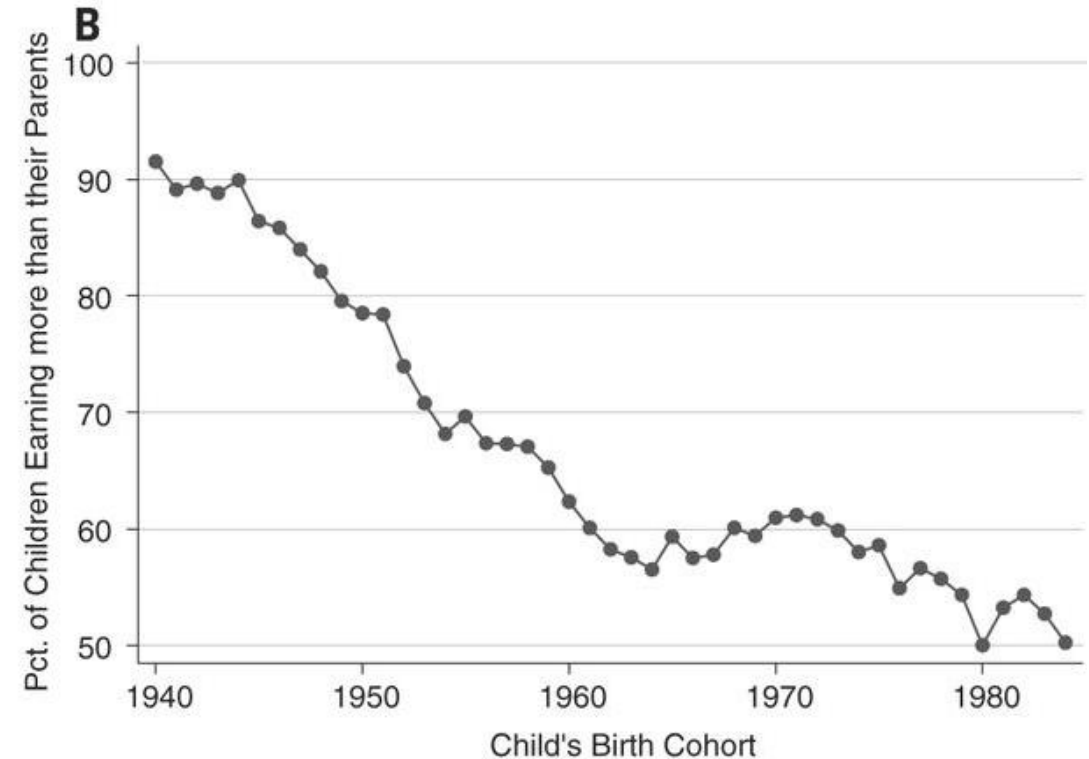
- **The ability of individuals to move between and within social class positions**
 - **Intra-generational – change in position that occurs during one's lifetime**
 - **Inter-generational – change in position that occurs across generations**
- **Can be upward or downward**

SOCIAL MOBILITY IN AMERICA

- **Absolute mobility**: whether you are making less or more than your parents do
 - Higher living standards across society
- **Relative mobility**: how your rank in the distribution compares to your parents
 - Social fluidity

CHETTY ET AL 2016

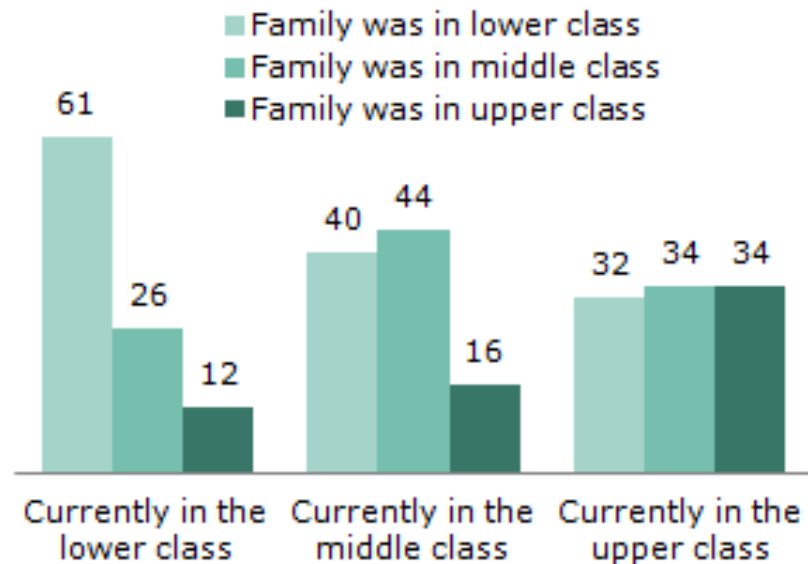
- **Decreasing absolute income mobility in America**
 - **Upwardly mobile children: 90% for the 1940 cohort to 50% for the 1980 cohort**
- **Increasing inequality causing >70% of the reduction in absolute mobility**



THE STICKINESS OF SOCIAL POSITION

Upward and Downward Mobility

% in each social class whose ...

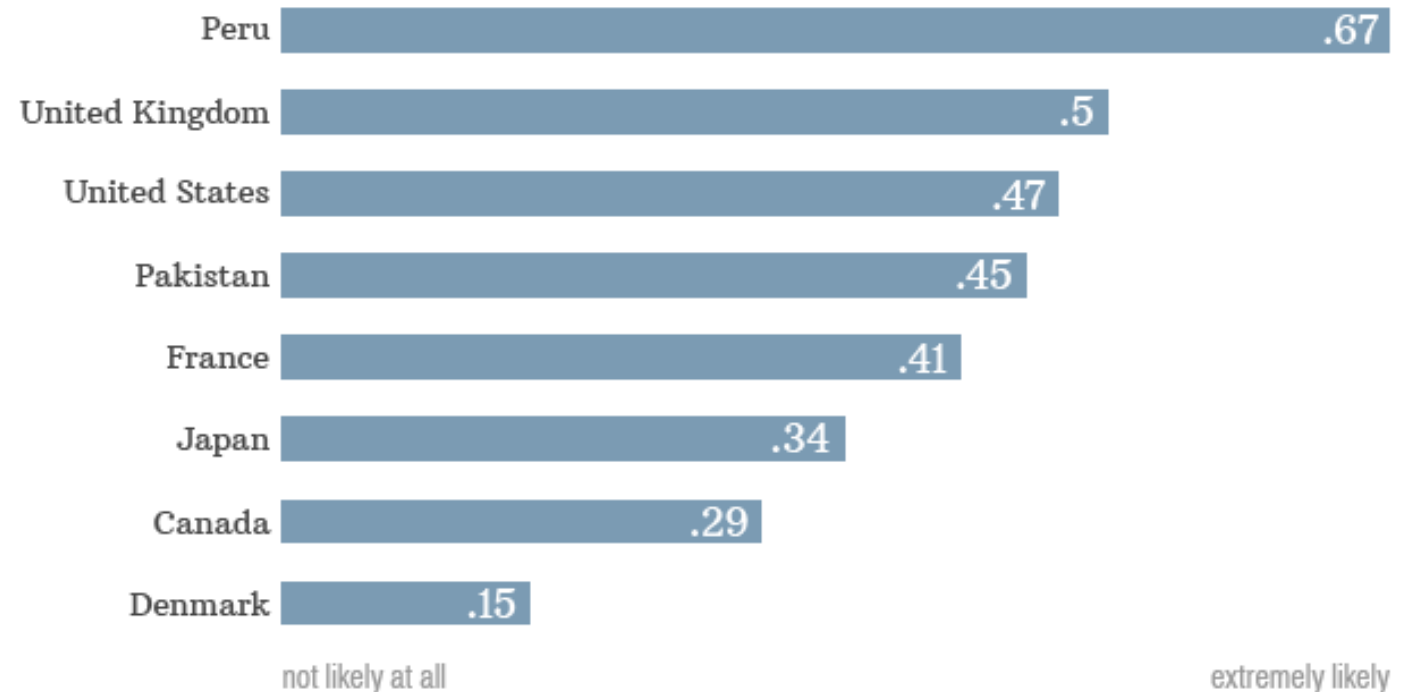


Notes: Based on total sample, N= 2,508. "Upper class" is those who identify as upper or upper-middle class; "lower class" is those who identify as lower or lower-middle class. "Don't know/Refused" for families' class not shown.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Q5, 6

Likelihood you'll be stuck in the same class as your parents



NOTE: 1= GUARANTEED. 0= NO CORRELATION AT ALL. SOURCE: MILES CORAK

NEXT MONDAY'S LECTURES

Lecture 8: Race and Ethnicity

- Readings
 - McMillan Cottom 2019: The Price of Fabulousness
 - Kanazawa and Funk 2001: Racial Discrimination in Professional Basketball
 - Optional: Foy and Roy 2020

Lecture 9: Colonialism and Global Racism

- Readings:
 - Fanon [1952] 2008: Ch 5 of *Black Skin White Masks*
 - Dixon & Telles 2016: Skin Color and Colorism review article