INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

Soc 1101: Summer 2023

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Social Stratification and Inequality

Lecture 6

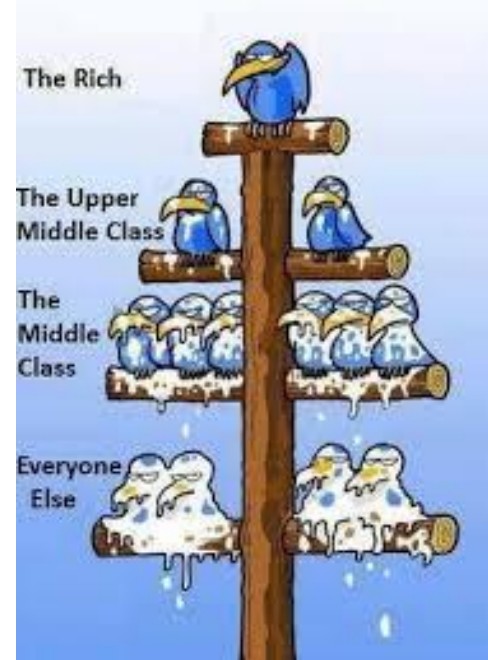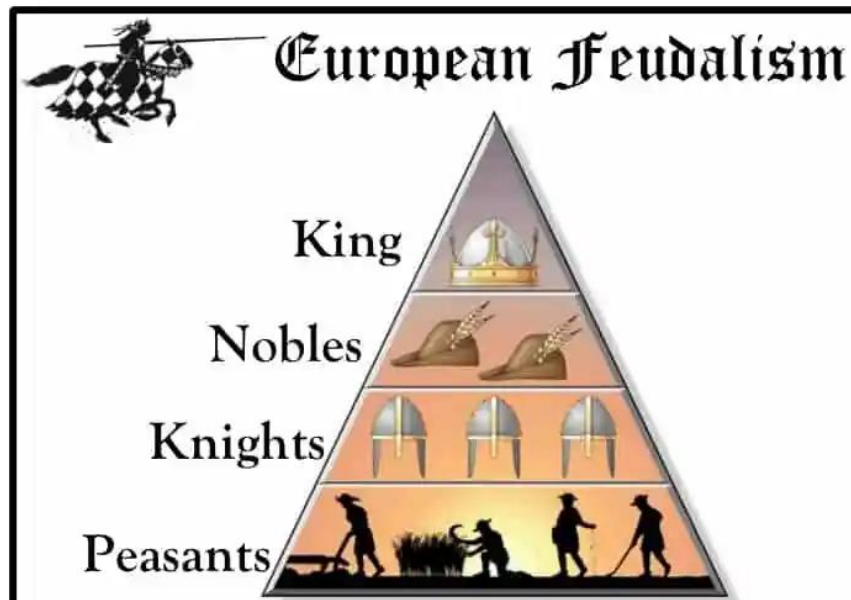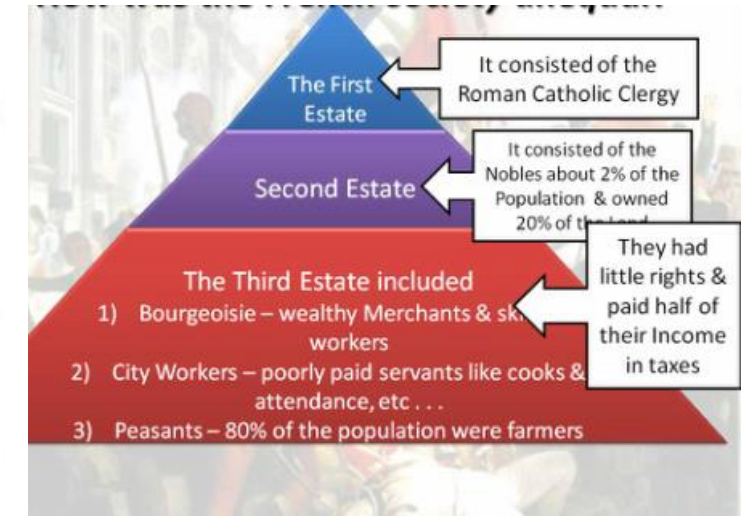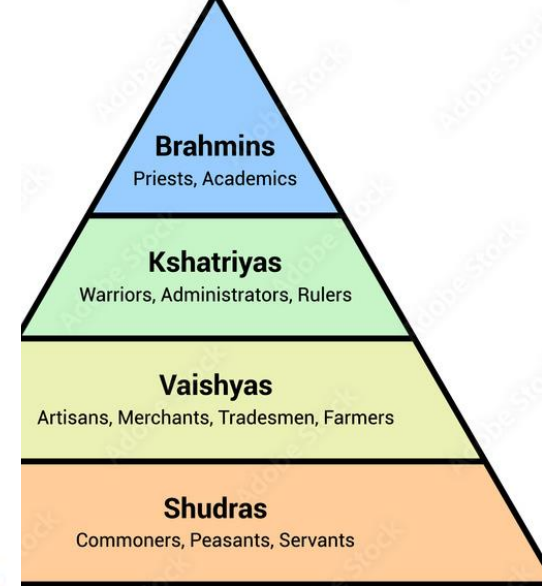**When other variables have relationships between the independent variable and the dependent variable that change the story about cause and effect this is called a**

A) spurious relationship.

B) superordinate relationship.

C) failed causal model.

D) failed variable.

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TODAY'S LECTURE OUTLINE

- **This section's big questions**
- **What is social stratification?**
  - **Does it serve a purpose within society?**
- **What is inequality?**
  - **Pros/cons**
  - **Trends/growth**
- **Next lecture: Social Class and Mobility**

Egyptian Social Pyramid: Pharaoh, Vizier, Nobles, Priests, Scribes, Soldiers, Craftsmen, Farmers, Slaves

Indian Caste System:
- Brahmins — Priests, Academics
- Kshatriyas — Warriors, Administrators, Rulers
- Vaishyas — Artisans, Merchants, Tradesmen, Farmers
- Shudras — Commoners, Peasants, Servants
- Dalits (Untouchables) — Street Sweepers, Latrine Cleaners

How was the French society unequal?
- The First Estate — It consisted of the Roman Catholic Clergy
- Second Estate — It consisted of the Nobles about 2% of the Population & owned 20% of the land
- The Third Estate included
  1) Bourgeoisie – wealthy Merchants & skilled workers
  2) City Workers – poorly paid servants like cooks & attendance, etc . . .
  3) Peasants – 80% of the population were farmers
- They had little rights & paid half of their Income in taxes

European Feudalism: King, Nobles, Knights, Peasants

The Rich, The Upper Middle Class, The Middle Class, Everyone Else

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Is social inequality inevitable?

A
Yes

B
No

WHAT IS SOCIAL INEQUALITY?

- **The distributional view: The unequal or uneven distribution of some good/reward/resource across (socially defined) groups within society**

- **The relational view: The presence of classist/oppressive/ hierarchical relationships across (socially defined) groups within society**

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WHAT IS SOCIAL INEQUALITY?

- **<u>The distributional view:</u> The unequal or uneven distribution of some good/reward/resource across (socially defined) groups within society**

Widely studied in mainstream sociology

- **<u>The relational view:</u> The presence of classist/oppressive/hierarchical relationships across (socially defined) groups within society**
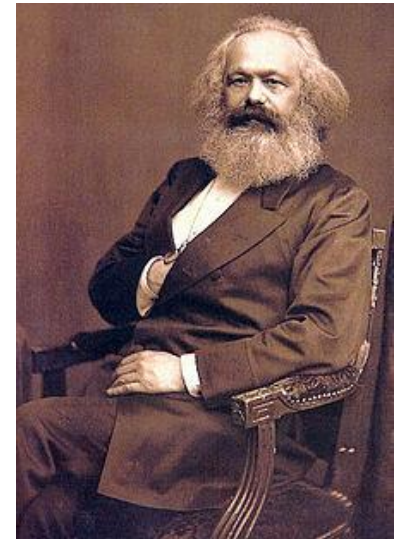
Usually neglected but important to feminist philosophers and critical theorists.

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MARX AND ENGELS 1848

"We find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank." (Lemert 2013, 34)

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

- **A system by which a society ranks groups of people in a hierarchy**
  - **More favored at top; less privileged near bottom**

- **Basic systems of stratification across history:**
  - **Slavery**
  - **Caste**
  - **Class**

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

- **This creates structured inequalities between groups that result in differential access to <u>capital</u> in the form of material or symbolic rewards**
    - **economic (money)**
    - **human (education)**
    - **social (networks)**
    - **physical (ability)**
    - **cultural (tastes)**

DOES IT SERVE A PURPOSE?

- **Davis and Moore (1945)**
  - **Functionalist perspective**
- **Tumin (1953)**
  - **Conflict perspective**
- **Krueger (2003)**
  - **Inequality has pros/cons**

FUNCTIONALIST PERSPECTIVE 1

- **Inequality serves a purpose in society**

- **It is universal, occurring in all societies**
  - **It is <u>necessary and inevitable</u>, and results from the need for social order**

- **To maintain social order, two things must happen:**
  - **Place people in the division of labor**
  - **Motivate people to work hard in that position**

- **A stratified system does both of these things**

- **Empirical description, <u>not</u> normative judgment**
  - **Medicine example**

FUNCTIONALIST PERSPECTIVE 2

- **Placing people in roles**
- **Differential rewards**
- **The result is equitable, to the extent that the competition is fair**
- **The system ultimately benefits everyone by creating the most efficient, most productive society**

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CONFLICT PERSPECTIVE 1

- **Inequality results from a struggle between groups competing for scarce resources**

- **Inequality in society is ubiquitous, but this <u>does not mean</u> that it is inevitable or positively functional**

- **Articulates several dysfunctions or negative consequences of inequality**

CONFLICT PERSPECTIVE 2

- **Emphasizes the role of coercion and power in producing social order**
  - **Competition is <u>not</u> fair**
- **Believes conflict over power and resources is inevitable**
  - **But this conflict produces unequal rewards, not functional importance**

A researcher who takes a functionalist perspective on inequality argues that

A) inequality is normatively good.

B) inequality is preventable.

C) inequality serves a function.

D) inequality is inherently fair.

TWO VIEWS ON INEQUALITY

- **Davis and Moore (1945)**
  - **Functionalist perspective – social position is determined by talent and skill**
- **Tumin (1953)**
  - **Conflict perspective – social position is determined by power, resource differentials and social structural factors**
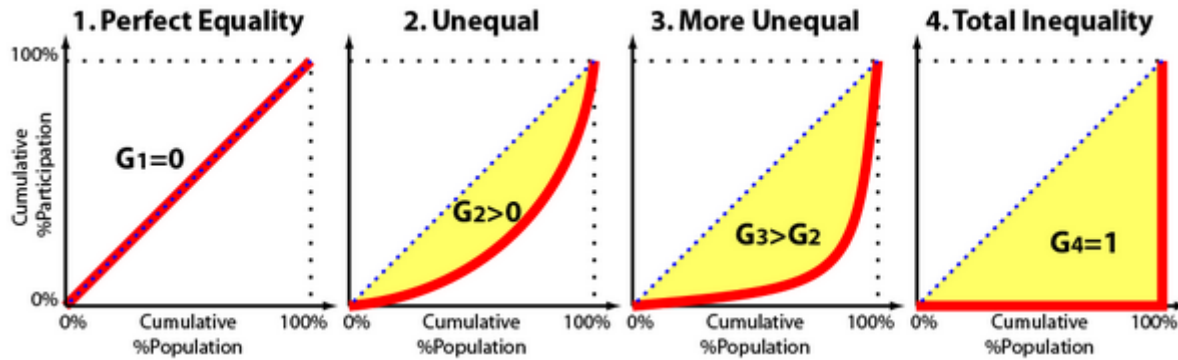
Krueger (2003)

- **Strike a balance between positive and negative consequences of inequality**
    - **Positive – inequality drives motivation and innovation**
        - **Example**
    - **Negative – bad if unrelated to skill/ability (productivity) and if easily influenced by those in power**
        - **Examples**

MEASURING INEQUALITY

- **Gini coefficient (range 0-1)**
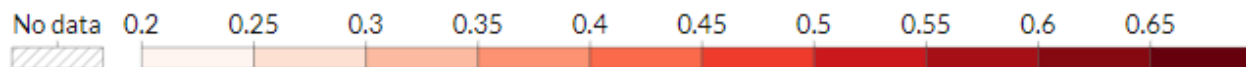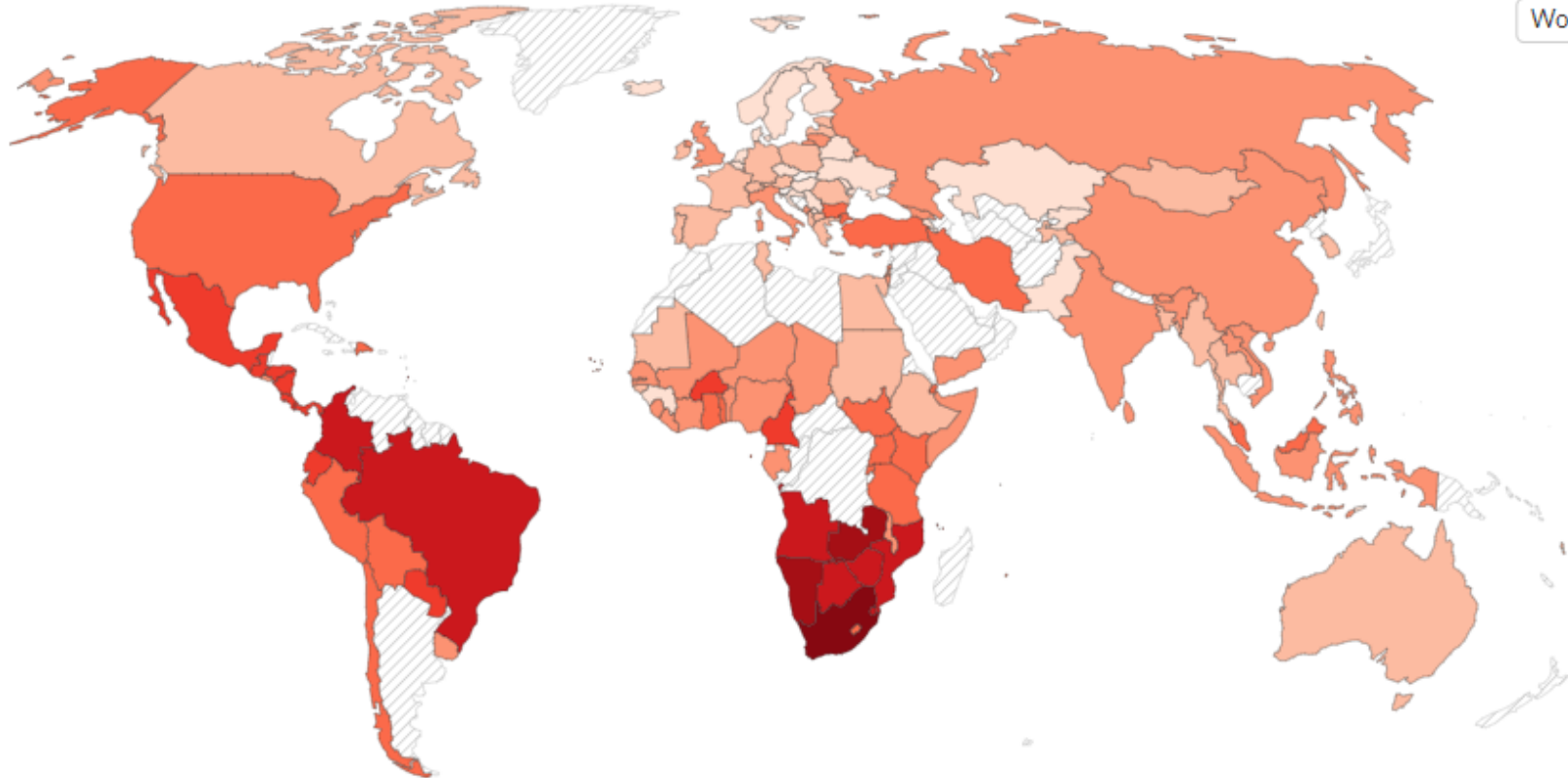 - **0=total equality**
  - **1=total inequality**

Income inequality: Gini coefficient, 2019

The Gini coefficient is a measure of the inequality of the income distribution in a population. Higher values indicate a higher level of inequality.

World

- **US Income Gini: 0.42; Denmark (0.28)**

- **US Wealth Gini 0.81**

No data 0.2 0.25 0.3 0.35 0.4 0.45 0.5 0.55 0.6 0.65

Source: World Bank Poverty and Inequality Platform
Note: Depending on the country and year, the data relates to either disposable income or consumption per capita.

OurWorldInData.org/income-inequality/ • CC BY

▶ 1967   2021

GROWING INEQUALITY

- **Rising income & wealth disparities**
  - **Wider gaps between the rich and poor**
- **Role of commodification**
  - **More money is needed to gain access to quality goods and services**
  - **Opportunity increasingly has to be purchased**
- **"Bad" inequalities on the rise**

David Grusky
Stanford Sociologist

Is social inequality inevitable?

A
Yes

B
No

NEXT CLASS

- **Social Class and Mobility**

- **Readings**
  - **Lareau 2002**
    - **"Social Class and Childrearing in White and Black Families"**
  - **Chetty et al 2016**
    - **"The Fading American Dream: Trends in Absolute Income Mobility Since 1940"**