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Life is Not Always Fair

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Preface

The purpose of this document is to act as a comprehensive note for my understanding on the subject matter. I may also use references aside from the lecture material to further develop my understanding, and these references will be listed here.

This document should eventually serve as a standalone reference for learning or review of the subject matter. There is also a lot of organization within these documents, please refer to the table of contents within your PDF viewer for ease of navigation.

References

- ...

Sociological Analysis

Fair?

This course is titled "Life is not always *fair*", However, what is actually considered fair? Here are some common things people consider to be fair:

- Equality¹
- Equity²

Regardless, here are working definitions that helps us wrap our heads around equality and equity

DEFINITION **Gender equality** means that people of all genders enjoy the same status and have *equal opportunity* to realize their full human rights, to contribute to national, economic, social, and cultural developments; and to also benefit from the results of those developments.

DEFINITION **Gender equity** is about being fair to people of all gender identities. It is the process of remedying historical and social oppression that would otherwise prevent people from fully contributing to political, cultural, and social life - and enjoying the benefits this contribution brings

¹ Maybe treating everyone as equals is considered fair, but what about addressing peoples individual circumstances?

² Maybe we should add some exceptions, and treat people based on circumstance, is this more fair?

Essentially, equality involves the concept of equal opportunity, and equity is about remedying the underlying factors that contribute to the inequality.

Not Always?

The next part we will analyze is the concept of life *not always* being fair. Well the term "always" refers to the frequency of this happening.

- In social science we rarely speak in absolutes

The big question we are trying to ask is . . .

If life is not always fair, Is it *ever* fair? What would it take to make things more fair? (In whatever way that *fair* means.)

Life?

By the term *life* sociologists mean **social life**

- The natural world is not inherently fair nor unfair, it just is - we all die eventually.
- fairness is a *social concept* - subject to collective action

The big question here is, "Under what conditions shall we live and die with one another?"

Life is Not Always Fair

Now lets talk about the bigger picture. What is the actual context of a statement like, "Life is not always fair".

- Capitulation?³
- Cynicism?⁴
- Critique?⁵

³ "Suck it up, it is what it is" mindset

⁴ Play dirty since everyone else is

⁵ Empirical challenge to the myth of "meritocracy" - the idea that people will achieve based on their own merit

Meritocracy Implies the following

- Failing to achieve is caused by a lack of positive behaviors.
- Individual choice determines social outcomes

Sociology invites us to consider factors beyond individual choices.

Challenging the Idea of Meritocracy

Lets try this by posing a question, "Is hockey success based on meritocracy?" In theory... Yes.

- You need to be a good player
- Success requires: Talent + Hard Work
- You cant "buy" hockey achievement

Someone (with too much time)⁶ did a study on the birth months of hockey players, and there is a trend that suggests that the most successful players are born in the months of January to April, this suggests *against* meritocracy

A possible societal explanation for this trend is as follows:

- Eligibility cut-off for age-class hockey is Jan 1
- Those born earlier on have had more time to grow bigger and stronger than those born late that same year.

Its interesting that this trend carries all the way onto the later stages of life, surely the people born later can catch up with hard work? There must be other social factors then...

- Advantages lead to even more advantages
- There is a social process that operates independent of anyone's individual choices. Selection⁷, Streaming⁸, Differentiated Experiences⁹.

So will being born within this month range, make you Sidney Crosby? Obviously not, The key idea here is that Correlation \neq Causation¹⁰

⁶ His name is Malcolm Gladwell, and yes, I did call him jobless

⁷ Being older lets u be selected earlier for advanced teams

⁸ You are streamed into better teams, with better teammates, better coaches, better opponents

⁹ All of these things enable people to improve as a player, these constant achievements enables them to identify themselves as a "hockey player"

¹⁰ Just because hockey success and birth months are correlated, it does not mean that birth month is the cause for hockey success