

Describe this ...



SOCIAL INEQUALITY



© Can Stock



Social Inequality

means the existence of unequal opportunities and rewards for different social groups. These inequalities can be based on natural differences such as age, gender and race ; or man made differences like class , caste and occupation.

Social Stratification

Is a particular form of social inequality. It refers to the presence of distinct social groups which are ranked one above the other in terms of prestige, power, wealth or **status**. Those at the top of stratification system will generally have more power in society than those at the bottom.

Basis of Stratification

Before classifying the different forms of stratification, it is important to look into the basis of these differences. Most types of stratification exist due to status difference.

What is Status?

Status refers to the 'prestige' or 'honour' that the society attaches to an individual by the virtue of his or her social position.

Achieved Status Any social position held by an individual as a result of his/her personal accomplishments in open competition with others. For example : the position of a doctor, a teacher or a lawyer.

Ascribed status refers to those social positions to which a person is associated due to birth or family background (factors like race, age or gender) like being an African, becoming a father, being young or old etc.

Forms of Stratification/Inequality

- 1. Slavery :** Slavery was a system of stratification in which some people were considered as slaves and others as free because of political and economic inequalities. These inequalities ensured that slaves carry out their assigned role of serving the free citizens of their society. They were objects of property relations meaning they could be bought and sold and had no say in their fate.(Since the system of slavery gradually ceased to exist by the end of 19th century , this type of stratification has no significance at present).
- 2. Estate/ Feudalism :** A system of inequality which is traditionally associated with medieval Europe. (Also existed in Japan, Russia and parts of the subcontinent until this century.) According to this system a society is divided into layers on the basis of ownership of land or property. The top most layer was enjoyed by the king who exercised his powers on nobles, these nobles served the king and exercised their authority over knights who dominated over farmers and peasants.
- 3. Caste :** Caste is a closed social stratification system in which membership is determined by birth and remains fixed for life. In this system, which is famously associated with Hinduism, different levels of superiority are ascribed to different castes.

1840

VALUABLE GANG OF YOUNG NEGROES

By **JOS. A. BEARD.**

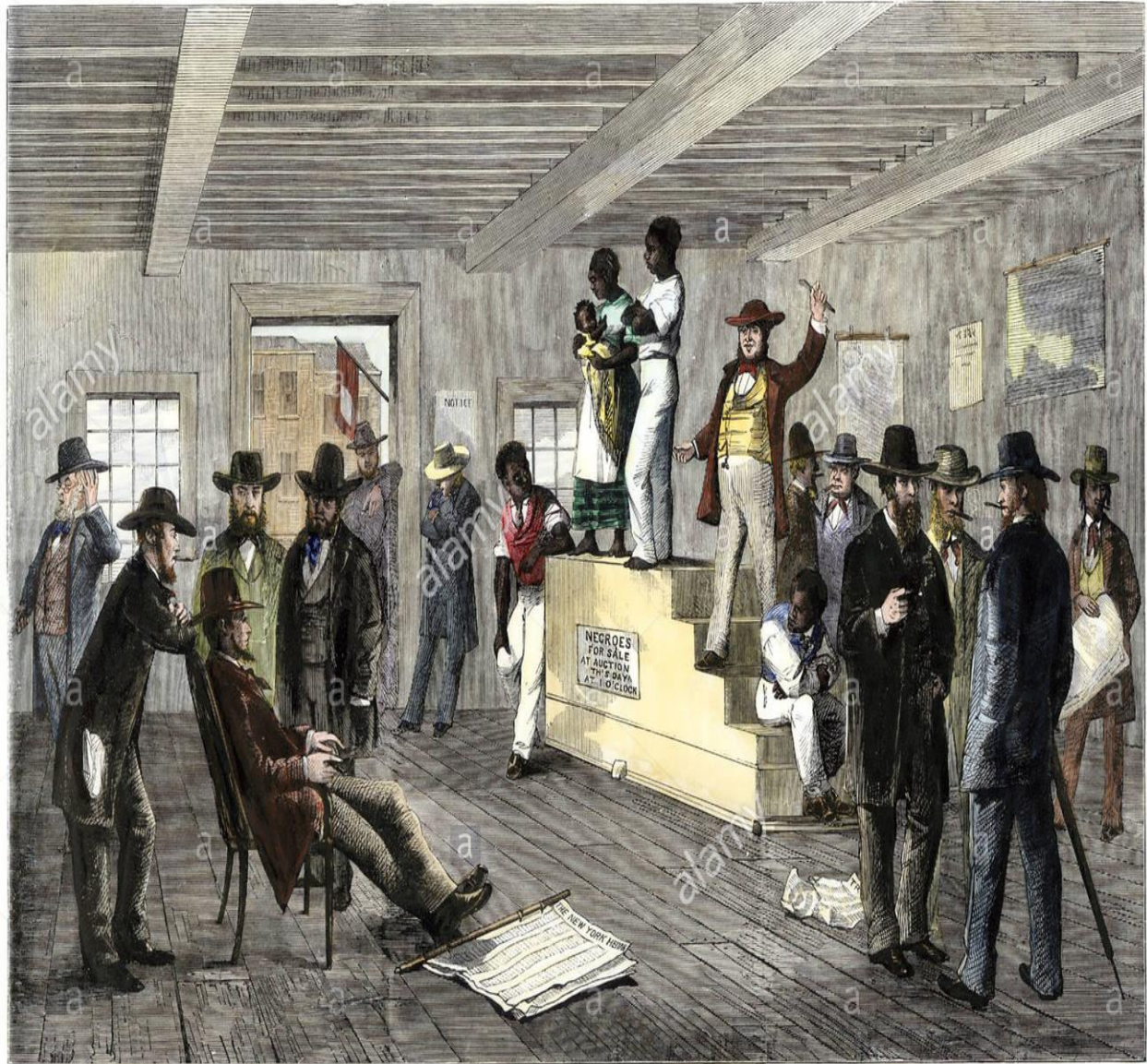
Will be sold at Auction,
ON WEDNESDAY, 25TH INST.

At 12 o'clock, at Banks' Arcade,
**17 Valuable Young Negroes,
Men and Women, Field Hands.
Sold for no fault; with the best
city guarantees.**

**Sale Positive
and without reserve!**

TERMS CASH.

New Orleans, March 24, 1840.



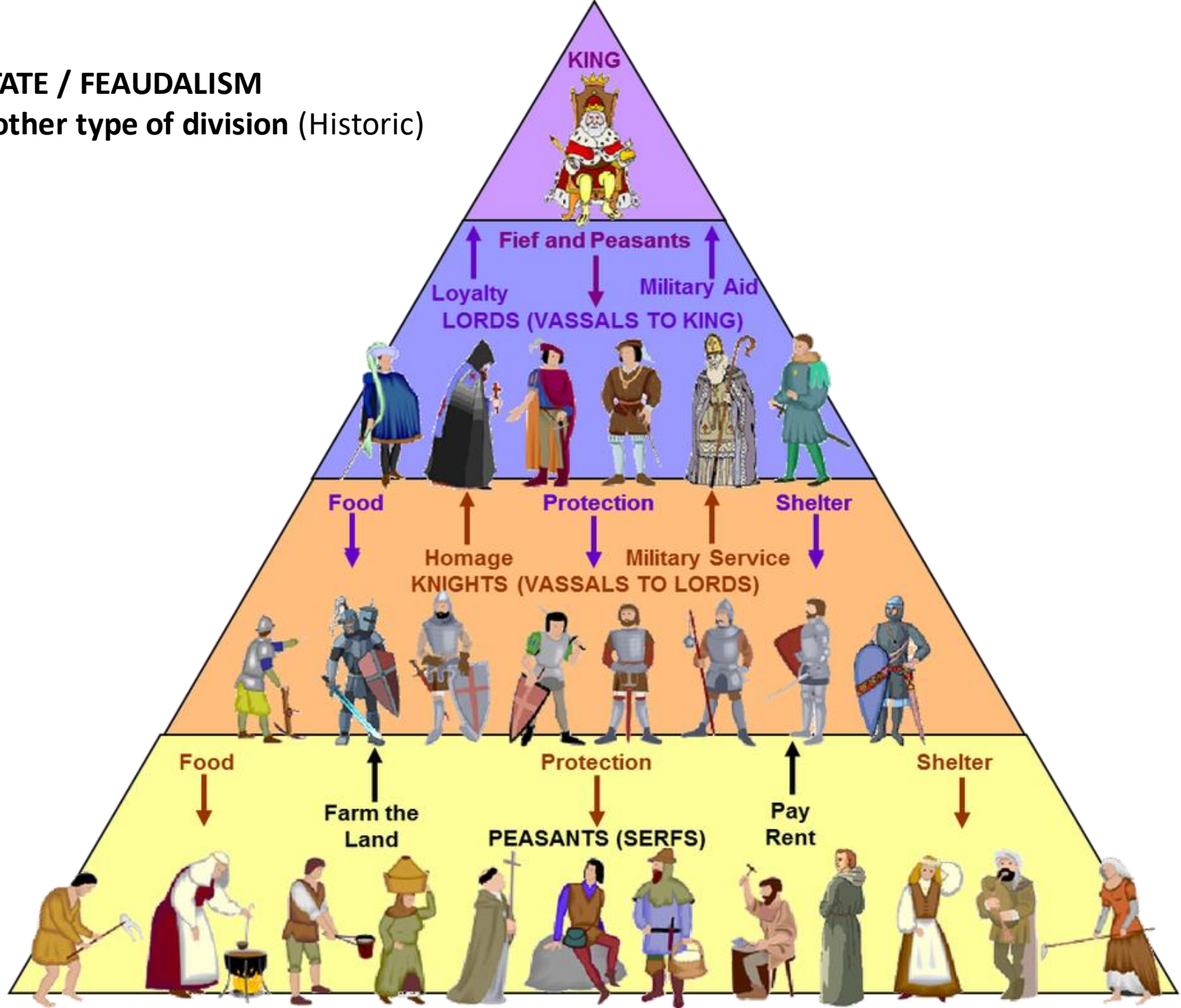
A SLAVE AUCTION IN VIRGINIA.—FROM A SKETCH BY OUR SPECIAL ARTIST.

a alamy stock photo

A9YYBB
www.alamy.com

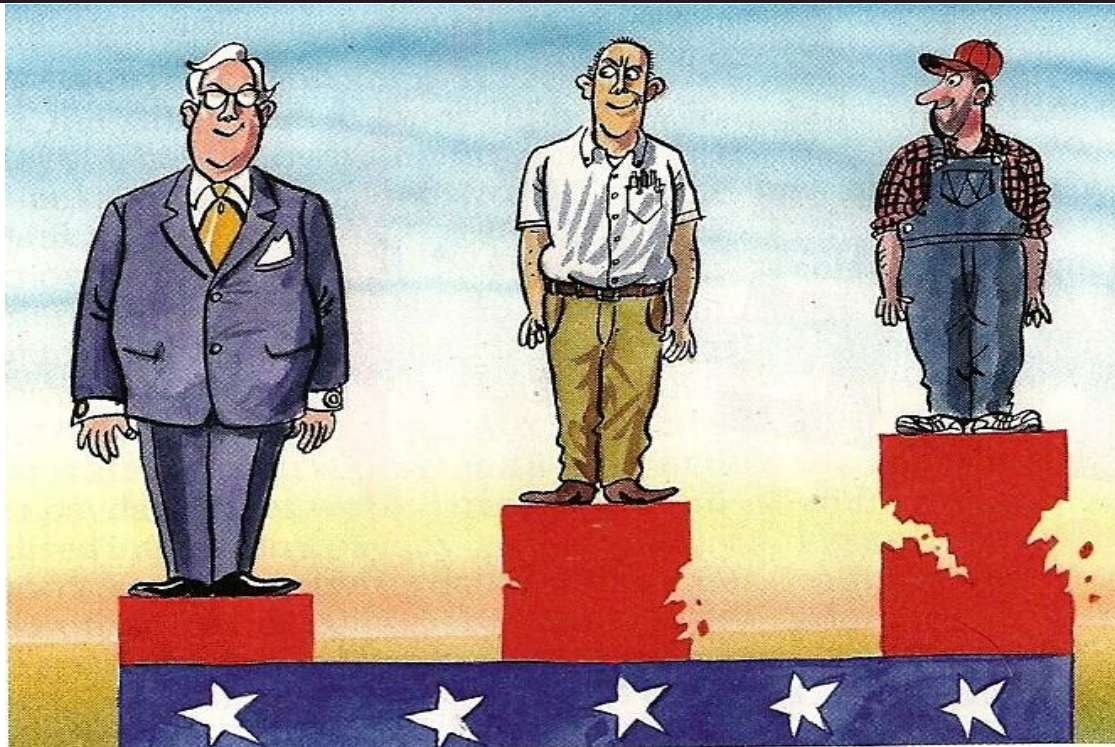
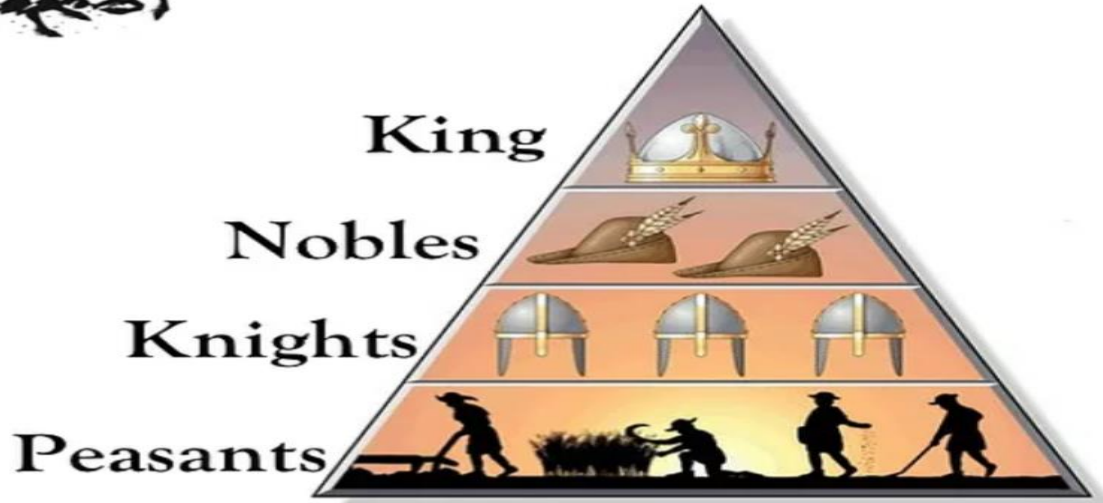
ESTATE / FEUDALISM

Another type of division (Historic)





European Feudalism



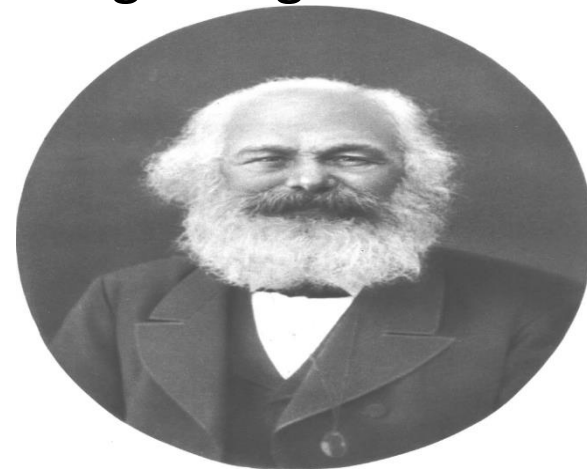
Social Class

In modern industrialized societies, class is considered to be the dominant form of social stratification system. People are grouped according to hierarchy (a series of steps) based on economic and status differences.

Origin and development of social class

There are three different explanations regarding the development of social class

1. The ideas of Karl Marx
2. The ideas of Max Weber
3. The Functionalist approach



Marxist theory of social class

The basis of Marxist explanation of social class is economic. For Marx individual's social class is defined by his ownership of means of production. According to Marx, class structure is divided into two groups.

- The Bourgeoisie
- The Proletariat

1. The Bourgeoisie (Capitalists)

The owners of means of production, who by the virtue of this ownership have the power and influence to shape the society.

2. The Proletariat (working class)

Everybody who works for a wage or a salary to sustain belongs to this class.

Origin of the classes (*Historical Materialism ~ three main epochs*)

According to Marx, in every society two classes have existed ; one that owned the wealth and the other that was exploited by the wealthy.

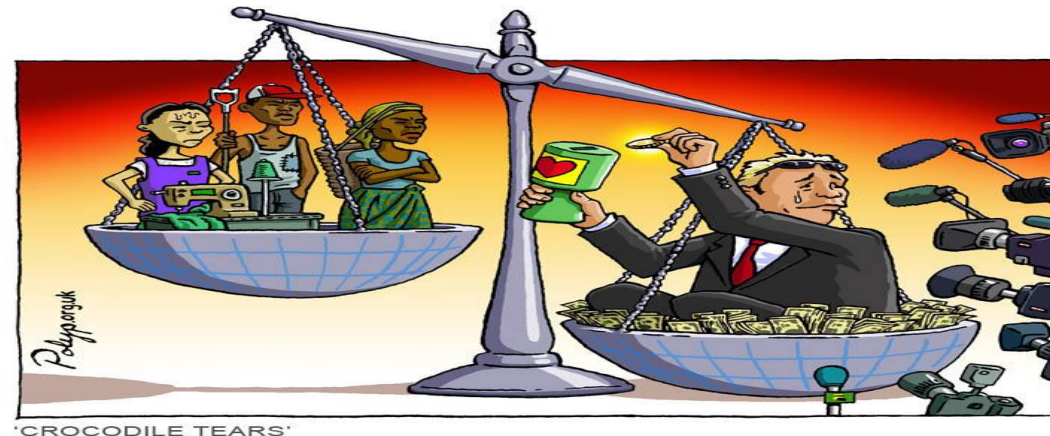
- In Ancient Greece and Rome, free men exploited the slave
- In feudal societies of Middle Ages, nobility ruled over the serfs/peasants
- In capitalist/industrial societies, there is an exploitation of bourgeoisie over the proletariat

Class conflict and exploitation

Marx believed that the key conflict is between the owners of means of production that i.e. the capitalists and the working class (labourer). The capitalist, after investing his wealth / capital makes the laborer work hard ,who turns the raw material into a saleable commodity. As a result, the capitalist makes profit but in return pays to the labourer as little as possible. This in Marx's viewpoint is exploitation.

False Consciousness

Marx believed that since all the sources of communication are controlled by the rich capitalists, they generate the ideas that whatever is beneficial for the elite is beneficial for the rest of the society. Due to this dominant ideology, the working class never raises voice against this exploitative order.



Class Consciousness and Prediction of a Revolution

According to Marx, there would be a stage in future when the nature of this exploitative order will be completely realized by the workers and thus they would achieve class consciousness. The workers/ proletariat will become revolutionary and will challenge the status quo. They would inspire the fight for equality and redistribution of wealth by overthrowing the exploitative bourgeoisie through a revolution.

End result = A Classless Society (Communism)

Criticism

1. Marx's argument of existence of only two classes is not correct. In reality, the class structure is much more complexed with a wide variety of groups existing in a society. For instance, the working class itself is divided into various groups earning different incomes.
2. Marx's prediction of a revolution in an industrialized England did not turn out to be true. It came in Russia and ultimately became the reason of the demise of Russia. However Marx was right at least in the sense that socialist labour movements among the working classes emerged in various industrialized countries in the late 19th century.



Max Weber

Max Weber's Theory of Social Class

Weber's work on class was influenced by Karl Marx though he refined the idea of social class by adding a further dimension to its meaning. He presented his own conflict based theory of stratification by introducing other factors that he considered important in explaining division between humans.

Market position and marketability

Weber did believe in ownership of means of production yet unlike Marx, he viewed a greater division of white collar workers like administrators, technicians and civil servants growing in numbers. He signified the value of market position of a worker as a decisive factor. He rejected Marx's view that the workers only had their labour to sell; Instead Weber believed that workers possessed varying skills , the distribution of which could be controlled to increase or decrease their marketability.

Weber suggested three elements that divide the people in every society

- **Economic factors**
- **Status**
- **Power**

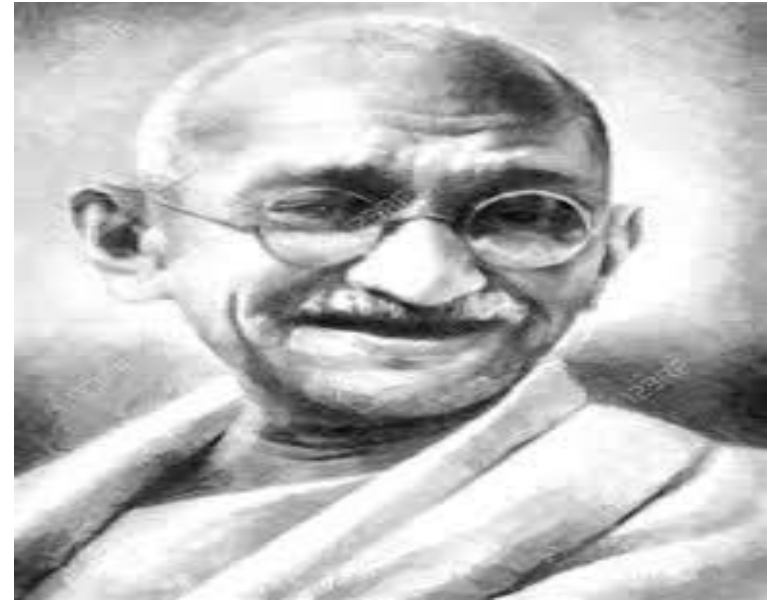
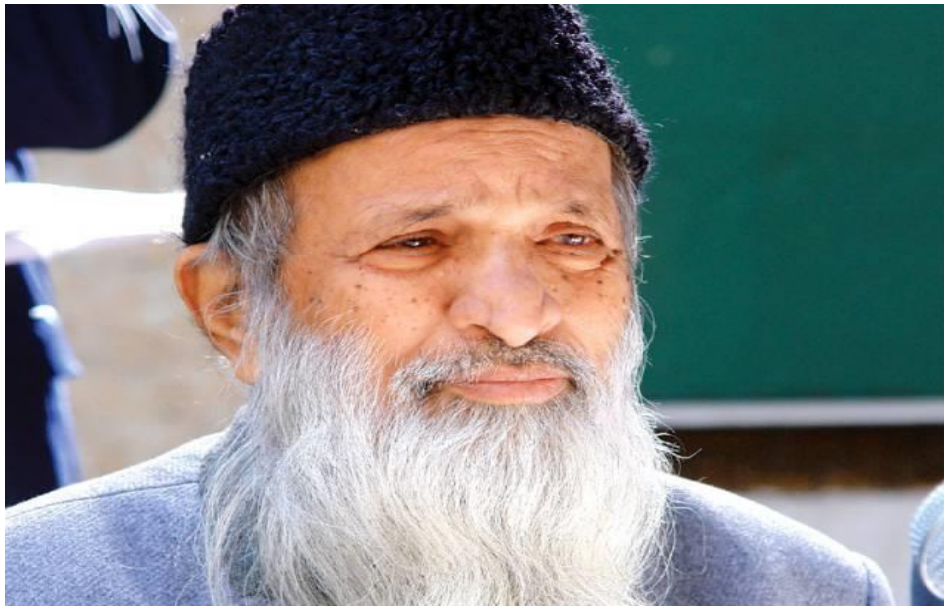
All combined together indicate an individual's "life chances"

Life Chances : A person's chances of success in life. For example the chances of obtaining those things defined as desirable such as good quality housing, good health , job security and educational success. Likewise avoiding those things which are undesirable such as ill health , educational failure and unemployment.

Class structure – A ladder : Weber argued that the divisions between people are very complex and the class structure resembles a ladder with a long series of small steps.

Economic factors – not the only determinant : Although the three elements i.e. economic factor, status and power usually go hand in hand for example a rich man having a high status is a routine sight yet it is not always the same. There exist many personalities who are not very rich but have immense power and status due to their personal qualities.

This is how Weber rightly claims that economic status is not the sole determinant of peoples' class



Functionalist theory of social class

The Organic Analogy:

The Functionalists view society as a human body. As each organ of the body plays its role for the health of the human being, similarly each part of the society performs a significant function to keep the society alive. There are some parts of the body which are more important than the others for example the heart is much more important than the finger. Likewise, in any social setup there are certain jobs that are more vital to the society than the others for example doctors are more important than mechanics. Due to this significance of doctors they are generally highly paid. This is how a division in the society would occur on the basis of occupational/ functional differences. However, the functionalists see little conflict among classes.

Criticism

Although it is right that some jobs are more important than the others, it is also very difficult to grade the jobs. The levels of income simply cannot signify the value of a job. It also depends on the negotiating ability of an employed person.

Ethnicity and inequality

Race : refers to the division of humans into different racial groups on the basis of physical characteristics like skin colour.

Ethnicity : a large group of people who have the same national, racial, or cultural origins.

Ethnic group : An ethnic group is a group of people who identify with each other based on similarities such as common ancestry, language, history, society, culture or nation.

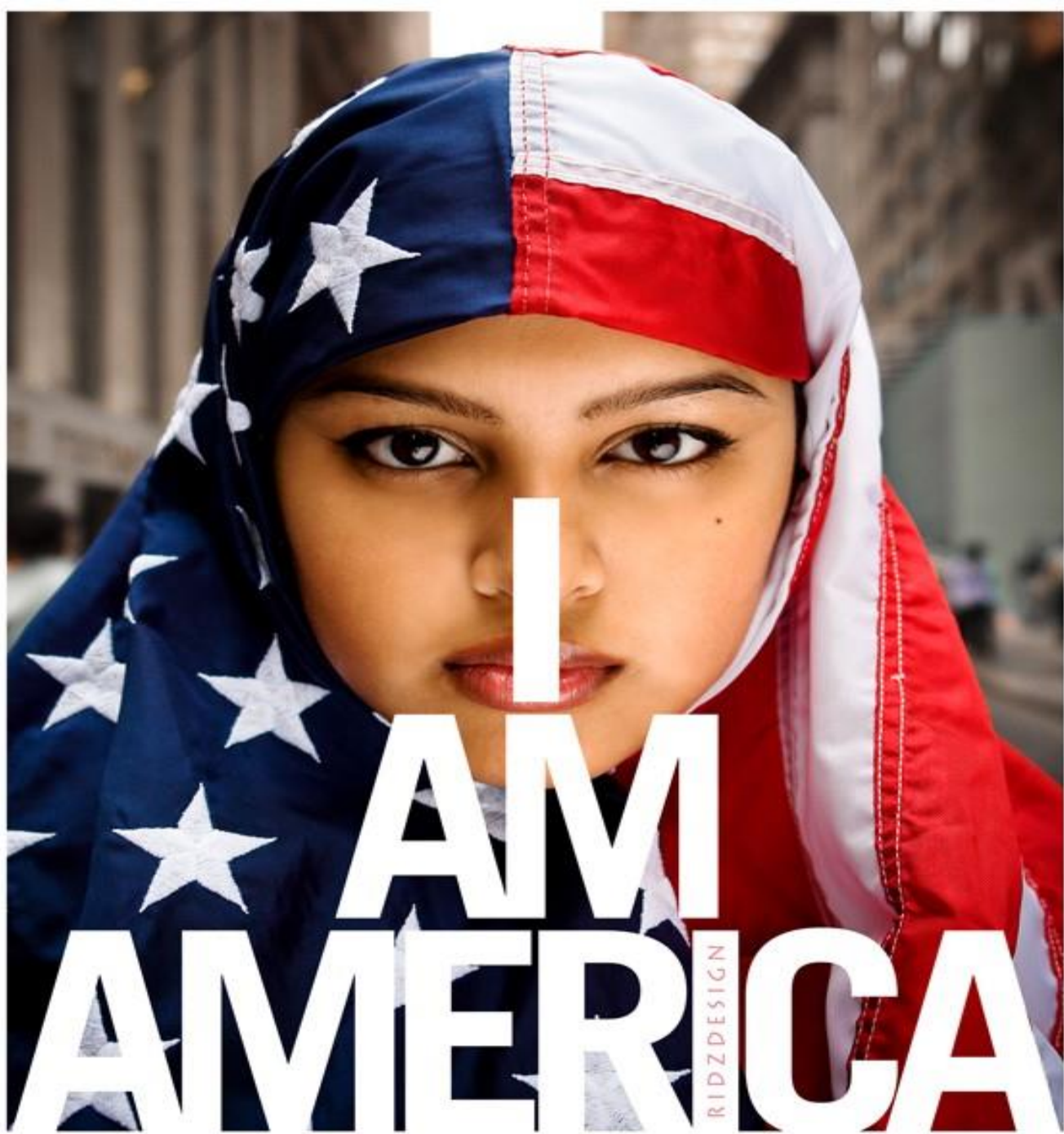
Minority ethnic group : is a group which shares a cultural identity which is different from the identity of the majority population of a host society.

Presence of different ethnic identities in different societies/Examples

- In Britain ethnic groups that migrated include the Irish, Jews, Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and more recently people from Eastern Europe
- In America many Asian communities have migrated including Koreans and Vietnamese for financial and other reasons.

Presence of minority races in the United States of America





I
AM
AMERICA

RIDZDESIGN

Ethnic Minorities in Britain



The Problems of Ethnic Minority Groups

Employment and Unemployment

- Minorities are less likely to get the best jobs.
- Under represented in managerial occupations.
- More likely to be employed in semi skilled or manual occupations as compared to white majority.
- More likely to face unemployment especially people having origin from Pakistan or Bangladesh.

Housing

- Minority groups tend to live in inferior housing to white people and in less desirable areas of towns and housing.
- Tend to live in older properties than white people and more likely to reside in small houses or flats.
- They face more overcrowding with fewer rooms in the house.
- People of Afro-Caribbean origin are more likely to live in rented accommodation . People of Asian origin , however are more likely to be house owners I comparison to other minority groups.





Education

- **Statistics show that most children from minority backgrounds underachieve in terms of education**
- **Explanation for underachievement include**
 - 1. Innate differences in intelligence**
 - 2. Language and cultural differences**
 - 3. Family and socialization**
 - 4. Social class**
 - 5. Social capital /networking**



Racial discrimination : Key terms

- **Racial prejudice** : Grudge or hatred to a racial minority
- **Racial discrimination**: caused by grudge to act unfairly against a racial group
- **Racism** : considering a minority inferior
- **Institutional racism** : The collective failure of an organization to provide an open and professional environment to people of different ethnic origins

Reasons of Racism

History

The British society has a long history of white domination of coloured races. Slavery and colonization were justified on the basis of superiority of white race over others. These ideas are still deep rooted in the minds of many minority groups.

Cultural differences

In a multicultural society like the USA or Britain there are differences of religion, values, dress, language, food and so on that many minority groups find difficult to adjust with. In other words there are bound to be conflicts or disagreements on these matters between the majority and minority population. This is better explained with examples of subculture.

Subculture

A subculture is a smaller culture held by a group of people within the main culture of a society , in some ways different from the dominant culture but with many aspects in common.

Acts of racism

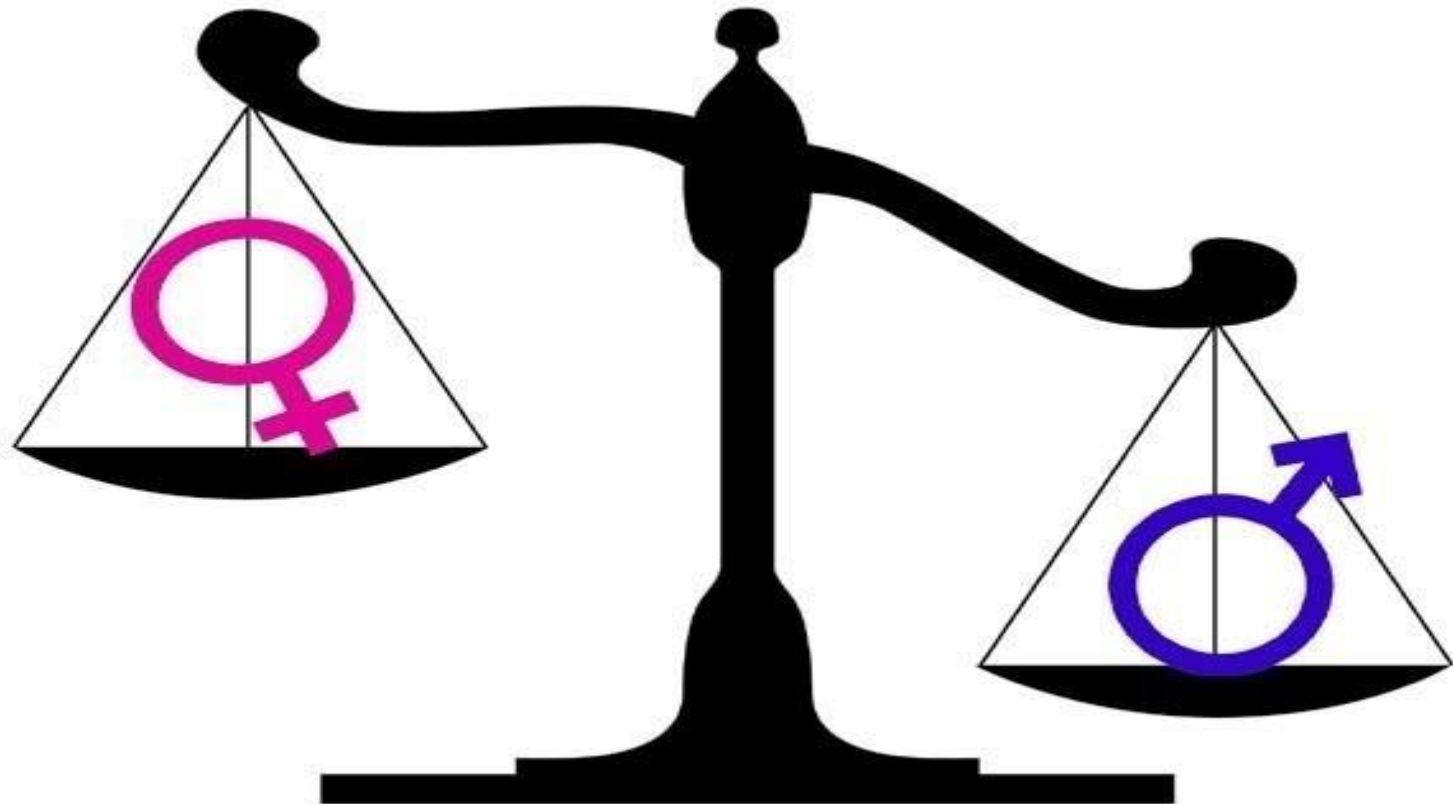
Stereotyping

A stereotype is a generalized, oversimplified view of the social group based on few general and more assumed characteristics of the group. Therefore the media portrays degrading stereotypical images of ethnic minorities,

Scapegoating

Scapegoats are individuals or groups blamed for something which is not their fault. During high crime rates or weak law and order situations it is easier for many authorities to scape goat th ethnic minorities.

Gender Inequality



What is meant by gender role?

Gender

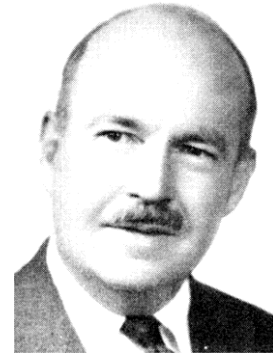
Gender refers to the cultural, socially constructed difference between males and females. It refers to the way a society encourages and teaches the two sexes to behave in different ways through socialization.

Gender role



According to **Talcott Parsons**

Men have an **'instrumental role'** as the bread winner whereas women have an **'expressive role'** as the care giver of the family.



Stereotypical images of a female and a male

Breaking the stereotypes



shutterstock.com • 1070594081



Four American women have broken many barriers by being elected as Congress members in recent American mid term elections

Reasons of change in the status of women

The Suffragette Movement

The Suffragette movement which started at the turn of the 20th century, aimed to achieve voting rights for women equal to the rights of men in parliamentary elections. This involved a long and violent struggle against male mindset of not allowing females to have a role in politics. The success of this campaign gave women political power in elections for the first time.

Two world wars

During the two world wars, women took over many jobs in the factories and farms which were formerly done by men, since the men went off to fight as soldiers. Women showed during these war years that they were quite capable of doing the job only men were supposed to do. This began to change people's ideas about a woman's role

The Women's Movement

The women's movement first emerged in the 1960s and was concerned with the fight to achieve with men in the wide range of areas to end patriarchy.

{PATRIARCHY means male dominance/a system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it.}

Suffragette Movement



Suffragette : The Movie





**Two world wars and
Women's role**



**Women's Movement to
get more rights**

Smaller family size

The declining size of the family has also reduced the time spent in child rearing and taking care of the family. This has given greater opportunities to enter paid employment. A typical mother of the modern age spends four years in child rearing and she lives much longer than the women of 19th century. Therefore she can pursue her career much earlier and can take it up consistently with fewer or no children to look after.

Technology at home

Advances in technology have brought many improvements in life style. Devices and machines like freezers, food processors, vacuum cleaners and washing machines have made life easier for women , thus giving them extra time for socialization and career pursuits.



SMALLER FAMILY SIZE

Technology at Home



However women are still experiencing problems while trying to cope with housework and their career

- **Domestic labour: unpaid work**
- **Gendered division of work**
- **Glass ceiling effect**
- **Workplace harassment**
- **Limited career opportunities**
- **Lower pay**
- **Limited access to training**



The term **glass ceiling** refers to an invisible barrier that prevents certain individuals from being promoted to managerial- and executive-level positions within an organization or industry. The phrase is commonly used to describe the difficulties faced by women and minorities when trying to move to higher roles in a male-dominated corporate hierarchy. The barriers are most often unwritten, implicit biases rather than defined corporate policies. The glass ceiling is an informal term for the social barrier preventing women from being promoted to top jobs in management.

