Today’s lecture: social stratification
1. What is social stratification?
2. Parable of the shmoo as an introduction to Marx’s ideas about stratification
3. Where does inequality come from?
And how much inequality is there?
4. social reproduction and social mobility

social stratification

The metaphor of stratification is taken from

social stratification

• social stratification: among members of a society
1. all societies have economic inequalities
2. but are than others
3. the amount of inequality in a society is largely determined by that
the moral problems of stratification

1. How there be in a society?

2. How should be determined?

Without question, the most influential thinker in the study of stratification has been

Much of Marx’s work attempts to understand the implications of the most important thing to happen in the 1800’s—

(the transformation from a society dominated by the to one dominated by the )
Parable of the shmoo

Taken from
Li'l Abner by Al Capp
strips from 1948

Sociological
significance:
Erik Olin Wright,
Class Counts, 1997

For factory owners to stay
factory owners, they need:

1. P of their
   of the factory

2. A pool of
   the factory

Parable of the shmoo

- FACTORY are better off if
  than if has them
- FACTORY are better off if
  than if has them
- The very fact that the shmoo is
Marxian social classes

- social classes are defined by their relationship to the “”
- Marx’s three social classes:
  1. b (owners)
  2. p (workers)
  3. p (self-employed)
- ex (for Marx): the factory generates a because of the , but the owner

If a job is miserable, why would someone do it?

The factory obtains the of workers in exchange for .

The worker gives up the right to in exchange for

Inherent conflicts in the wage-for-labor transaction

1. How much money will the owner pay the laborer?

2. How much of the worker’s time and effort will the owner get in return?
What separates middle-class jobs from bad jobs?

1. Autonomy in which worker is expected to give necessary effort without close monitoring; extra wage or prestige that is exchanged for acting as if the interests of...

2. Possession of a human capital; investments made in oneself that improve...

“contradictory class locations”: lower managerial jobs that share characteristics with both the position of...

Where does inequality come from?

- My point: the amount of inequality in a society is strongly influenced by...
- Contrast with: ideas that inequality is determined by...
- Consider: the choices make about what (and what not) to...
- My point is not that particular...


How much inequality is there in American society?

(Well, as a first thing, do we want to talk about it in terms of inequality in or inequality in ?)

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Graphs of inequalities in wealth for families in the United States

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social mobility

• social mobility: movement within the

• distinction #1: vertical mobility vs. horizontal mobility

• distinction #2: intragenerational mobility vs. intergenerational mobility
“lumping on the diagonal”
parents position and children’s position

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social reproduction:
processes that characteristics of social structure

Contrary to common belief, the United States social mobility than other developed countries, except for mobility ( ).
replacement vs. structural mobility

- A puzzle?: How can there be more upward mobility than downward mobility
- replacement mobility: social mobility that occurs as the result of
- structural mobility: social mobility that occurs as the result of

Musical chairs illustration of:

1. the distinction between structural and replacement mobility
2. what it means to say that some people are relatively more advantaged than others, even though we all have some control over how our lives end up