

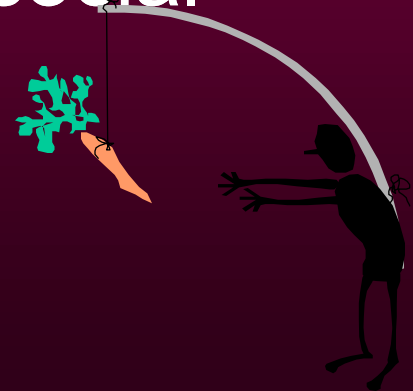
# SOCIAL STRATIFICATION





# Social Class

- ❁ Definition: *Social stratification is the ranking of people in society by other members of the society into higher and lower positions so as to produce a hierarchy of prestige.*
- ❁ Social stratification produces social classes.



# Characteristics of Social Class

- ❁ Social classes tend to resist interclass interaction.
- ❁ Social classes are arranged in a hierarchy of status.
- ❁ Social class is multidimensional.
  - status crystallization
- ❁ Social classes are dynamic.
  - social mobility



# Indicators of Social Class

- ⌘ Personal interactions
- ⌘ Occupation
- ⌘ Education
- ⌘ Possessions
- ⌘ Personal Performance
- ⌘ Values

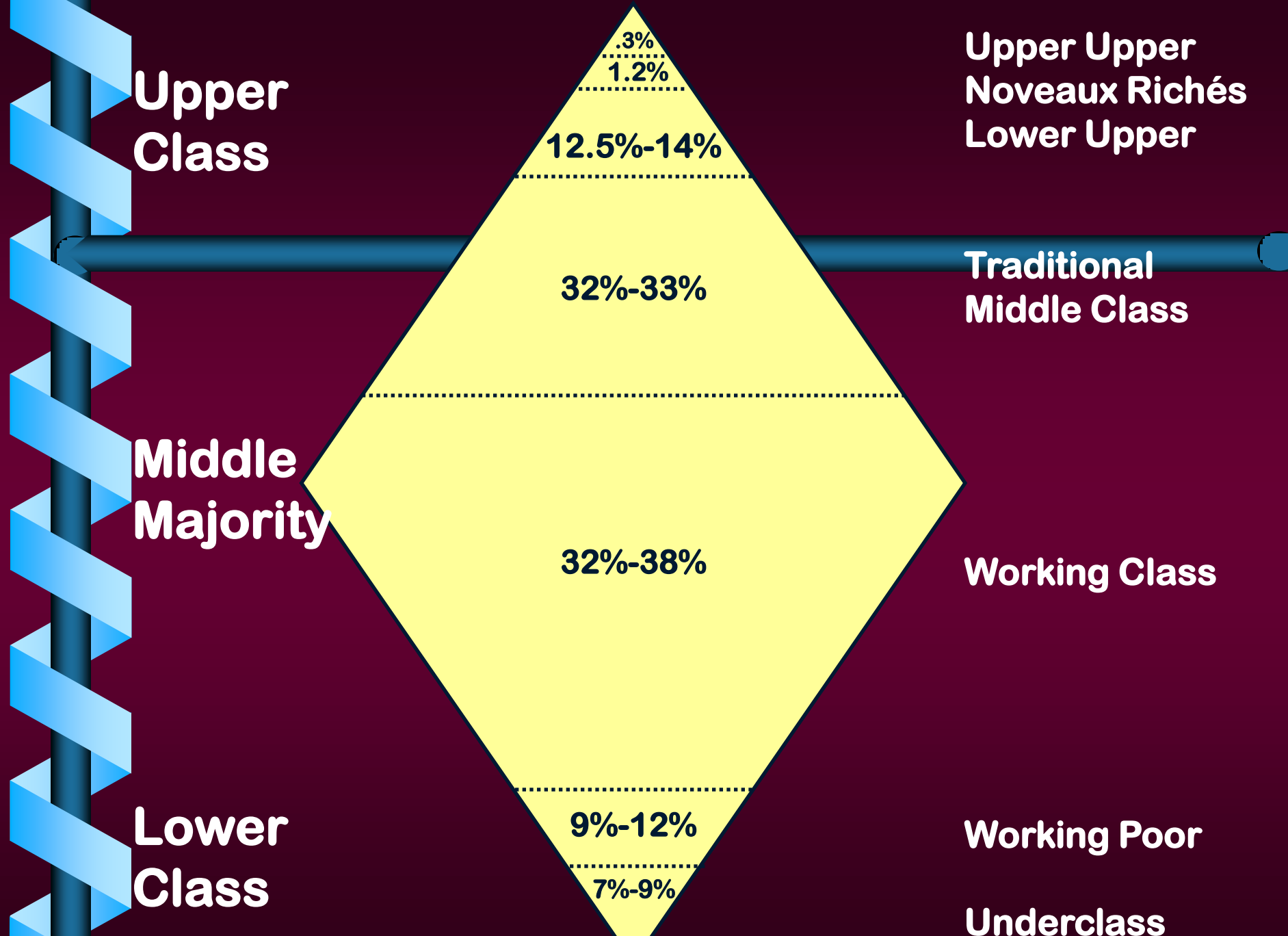


# What about Income?

- ⚙️ There is only a small relationship in the U.S. in modern times between social class and income.
- ⚙️ This is due to many things but fundamentally greater income in the U.S. doesn't by itself give one higher social status!
- ⚙️ There is a great range of incomes for each class in this country.
- ⚙️ Income does determine whether a family is over- or under-privileged for their class.

# Structure and Size of Social Classes in America

- ❁ A three class system has been found repeatedly in research.
- ❁ It is the subdivisions, their names and their relative sizes that are debatable.
- ❁ It appears to the experts that the Upper Class, the Middle Majority, and the Lower Class have the following relative proportions of the American population: 15%, 70%, and 15%.



# Distinguishing Characteristics of American Classes

- ⚙ The Working Poor have a job and support themselves and there is respect (status) in doing that vs. being dependent.
- ⚙ The Working Class focus on local things such as news and sports.
- ⚙ They are very family oriented, rely on them heavily, and want to live near them.

# Characteristics (con't)

- ⌘ The traditional Middle Class are concerned about developing themselves and making sacrifices rather than “living for today.”
- ⌘ Educational and career attainments explain the position of the Lower Upper class. They may not seem too different from the “middle class” but they relate more to the upper class.

# Characteristics (con't)

- ⚙️ The Nouveaux Richés have most likely earned their position and wealth.
- ⚙️ They tend to be much more flamboyant in showing off their wealth than those at the very top.
- ⚙️ The Upper Upper aren't necessarily the richest but they were born into a family with a history of high status.

# Measuring Americans' Social Class Membership

- ⚙ Warner's Index of Status  
Characteristics: ranks people based on occupation, source of income, housing type, and dwelling area.
- ⚙ Hollingshead Two-Factor Index: uses occupation and education.

# General Implications

- ❁ In some situations social class is a better predictor of demand while in other cases income is better.
  - ➔ Social class may be the better predictor when products are not very expensive but do relate to the lifestyle of just one class, e.g., alcoholic beverages, magazines, some foods.
  - ➔ Income may be the better predictor when the products are very expensive but are not viewed as linked to any one class, e.g., cars, boats, jewelry, major appliances.

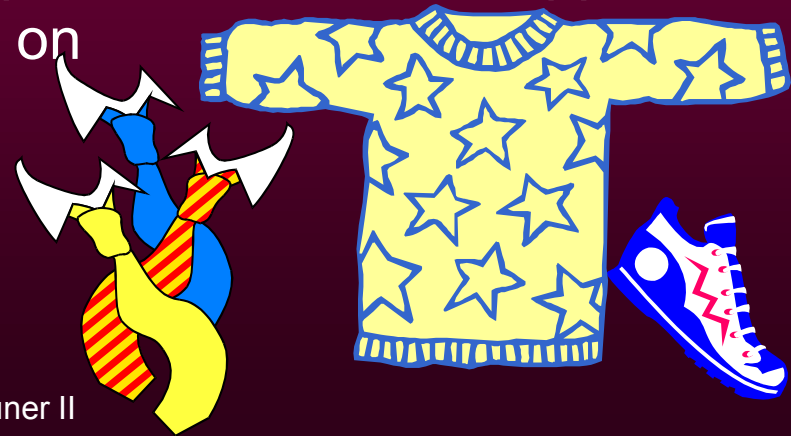
# General Implications

- ⚙ There are "overprivileged" families in each class and they should be the main target for luxury items.
- ⚙ Being "underprivileged" is a strong risk factor for being in debt.
- ⚙ So, it may be better to ask how social class affects use of income, rather than asking about social class or income by themselves.

# Class Effect on Consumption

## ❁ Clothing

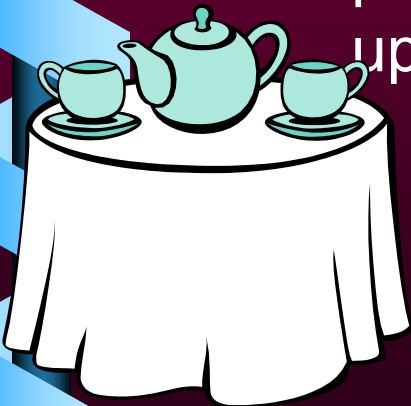
- Style of clothing worn is linked to social class because of its high visibility.
- Of all classes, the greatest attention is paid to clothes by the upper class.
- The lower half wants clothes that are durable, comfortable, & reasonably priced whereas the upper half places more emphasis on their own ideas of fashion even if that means choosing “classic” styles.



# Class Effect on Consumption

## ❁ Home Furnishings

- Not only can the home and neighborhood reflect one's social class but also the furnishings.
- The lower half seeks utilitarian characteristics (functional, comfortable, durable, easy to care for) and conventional styles whereas creation of a personal style takes on special importance to the upper half.



# Class Effect on Consumption

## ⦿ Leisure

- Their choice of leisure activities may be influenced by their work and lifestyle.
- Some leisure activities have started with the upper classes and disseminated to the other groups over time as the latter have had more time for leisure.
- The satisfaction for upper classes comes from learning, achieving, or creating vs. the satisfaction is from the activity itself or its social aspects for the lower classes.



# Class Effect on Consumption

## ⚙ Shopping

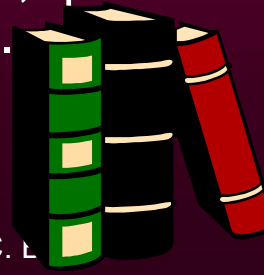
- The upper class feel more confident in their shopping ability and venture to new places to shop but prefer stores with pleasant atmospheres and avoid crowded stores.
- Middle Class shoppers are the comparative shoppers and the bargain hunters.
- The Lower Class prefer neighborhood stores where they can receive personal service and easy credit.



# Class Effect on Consumption

## ⚙ Search and Media Usage

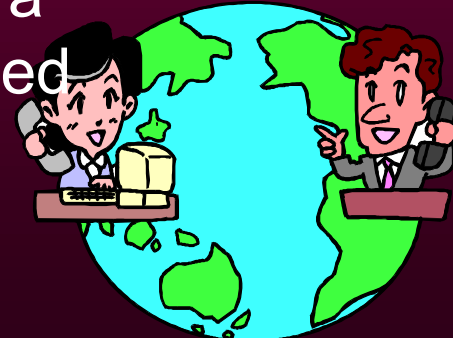
- ➔ Education seems to be very important.
  - Better-educated people spend more time reading news and analysis magazines, nonfiction books, and editorial material in the newspaper.
  - What reading the less educated do is of fictional books and general news stories in the newspaper.
- ➔ When the upper classes watch T.V.
  - it is generally for news or dramatic shows.
  - The lower classes watch more T.V. and they prefer soap operas, quiz shows, and situation comedies.



# Class Effect on Consumption

## ⚙ Language Patterns

- In research it's been documented that language patterns are closely related to social class.
- Further, high-status persons are perceived as being more credible but communication is more efficient between people who are similar.
- A possible conclusion is that you should adjust it so that the language pattern used is a little “classier” than that of the intended target.



# SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

- ❁ Social class can have major influences on consumption especially when the divisions between classes are clear.
- ❁ But, in the U.S., it is hard to define and measure because it is influenced by so many factors.
- ❁ Plus, it should NOT be viewed as the same thing as wealth and income.
- ❁ Ultimately, Americans in different classes may own many of the same objects yet use them to develop different lifestyles.