

Social Class

People Like Us

- The interplay of class and status
 - The Bread Controversy
 - The (Not-So) Extreme Makeover

Different Images of the System of Social Class

- Gradational conception of social class
 - Social Classes as Ladder Rungs
 - One dimensional – single inequality
 - Multi-dimensional – many forms of inequality
 - » E.g. income, knowledge, cultural sophistication, physical beauty, health etc.
 - Dimensions are reinforcing
 - » Advantages are highly and positively correlated
 - Dimensions are loosely coupled
 - » Advantages are unrelated
 - » Advantages are compensating (negatively correlated)
 - Nominalist notion of class:
 - Class is just a word to talk cut up a continuum – no real boundaries



Different Images of the System of Social Class

- Relational conception of class
 - Class as interlocking pieces of a puzzle
 - Functionalist
 - Agrippa's tale
 - » Menenius Agrippa in 494 BC was sent to persuade rebellious soldiers in the city of Rome in protest of inequalities with a fable of the different parts of the body rebelling against the stomach
 - Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore (1945)
 - » Societies must have inequalities to 1) fill important positions, 2) compensate people for necessary training and the scarcity of their talent.
 - Conflict based
 - Karl Marx (1818-1883)
 - » Marx posited that capitalist societies have two main classes: the bourgeoisie (capitalist class) and the proletariat (working class) and the former exploits the latter
 - Realist notion of class
 - Classes are actual groups with clear boundaries



Max Weber (1864-1920)

- Class (production)
 - Income
 - Wealth
 - Economic Opportunities (Life chances)
- Status (consumption)
 - Life style
 - Taste, culture
 - Prestige
- Organization (MW calls it 'party')
 - Position in the hierarchy of
 - Organization
 - Association
 - Bureaucracy
 - Power
 - Ability to get people to do what you want
 - It can rest on
 - class (Kane)
 - status (Gandhi)
 - organization (Corleone)

Everyday/Colloquial Notions of Class

- (Economic) Class I = income and wealth
 - E.g. upper class vs. lower class
 - Gradational
 - One dimensional
 - Weberian class
- (Economic) Class II = occupational groups
 - E.g. blue collars, managers, entrepreneurs, professionals
 - Relational
 - Functionalist
 - Weberian class
- (Social) Class III = life style (emphasized in People Like Us)
 - E.g. WASP, hillbilly
 - Relational
 - Weberian status group
- American Dream
 - Economic Class I: big inequalities but moving up open to everyone
 - Economic Class II: every class is equal
 - Social Class: free choice

Incomes in the U.S. (2005)

- Median Personal Income

- U.S.: \$24,325

- For persons age 25 or older: \$32,140
- For persons working full-time: \$39,336

Age 25+, employed full-time

Some high school :	\$ 25,039
High school graduate:	\$ 31,356
Some College:	\$ 37,135
Associate Degree:	\$ 40,588
Bachelor's:	\$ 50,944
Master's:	\$ 61,273
Professional:	\$100,000
Doctorate:	\$ 96,830

Family Incomes

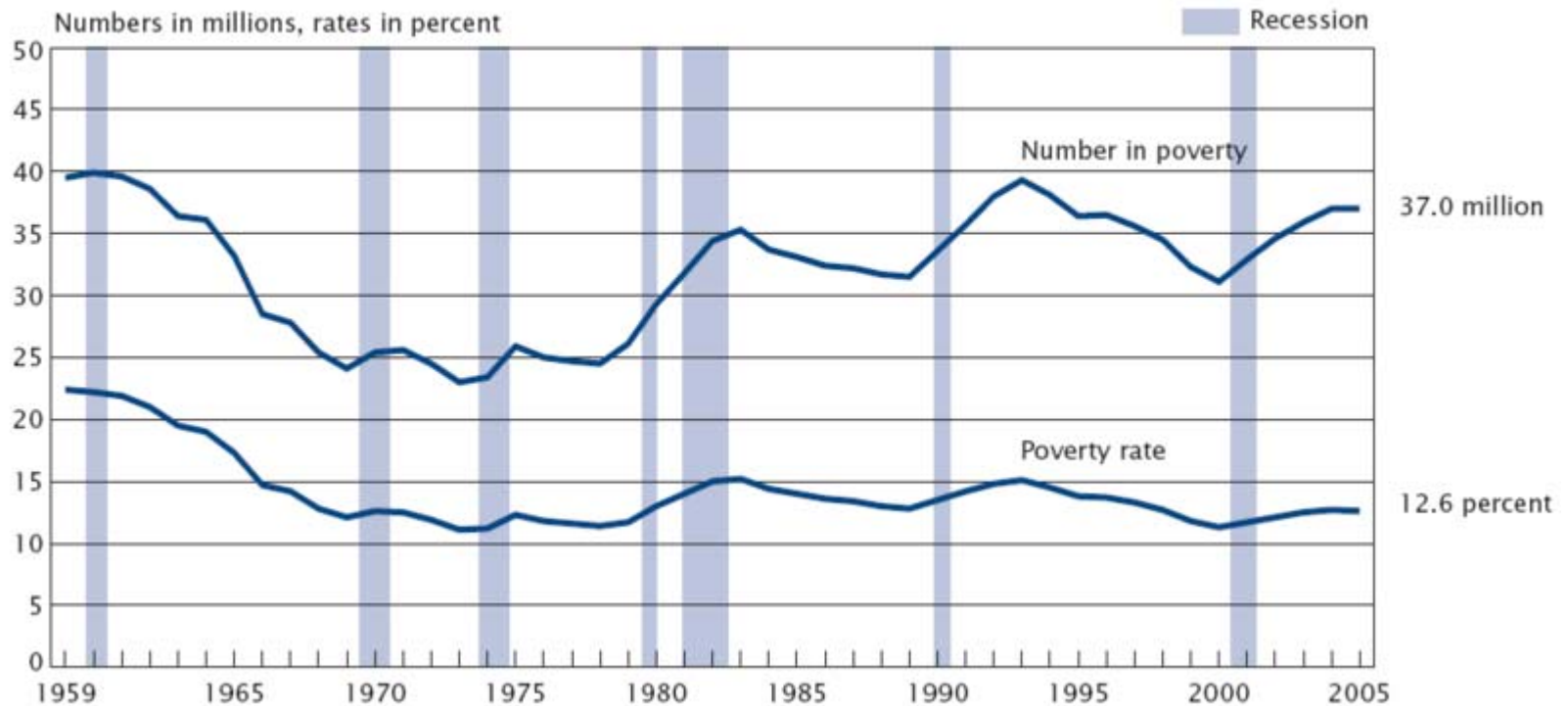
- Median Income of a family of 4
 - U.S. \$63,000
 - California \$66,000
 - New Jersey \$82,500
 - West Virginia \$48,000

Distribution of households by income (2005)

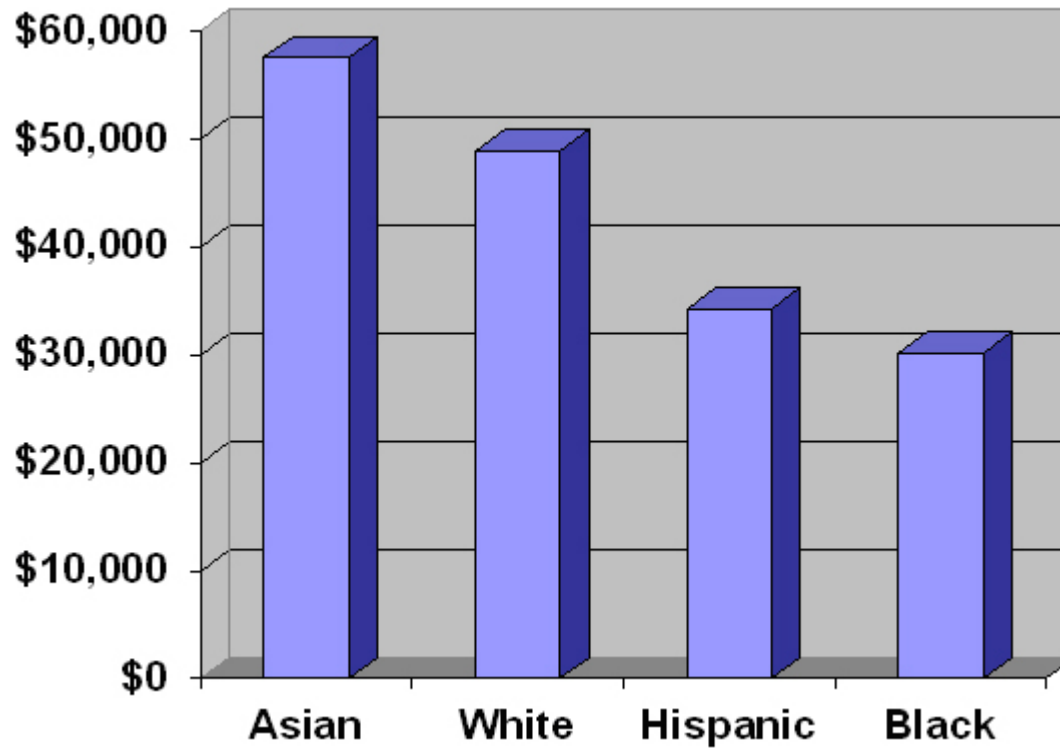
Percentile	Upper limit
10 th	\$ 11,288
20 th	\$ 19,178
50 th (median)	\$ 46,326
80 th	\$ 91,705
90 th	\$126,090
95 th	\$166,000
99 th	\$350,000

Poverty

Number in Poverty and Poverty Rate: 1959 to 2005



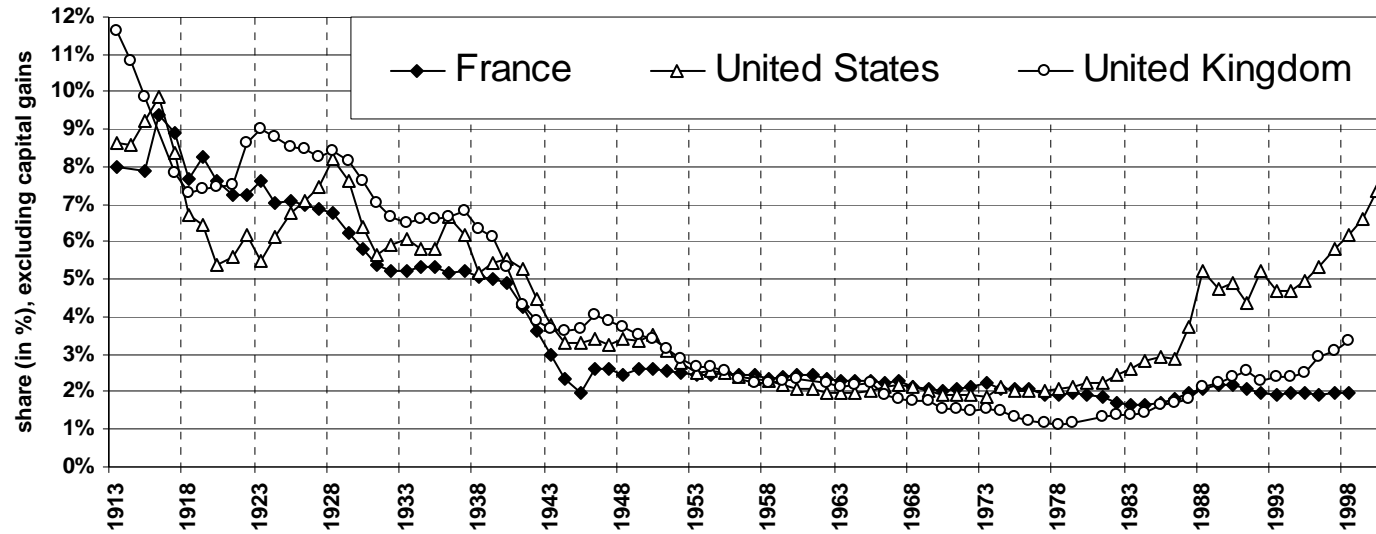
Median Household Income by Race



The Very Rich

(Piketty and Saez 2003)

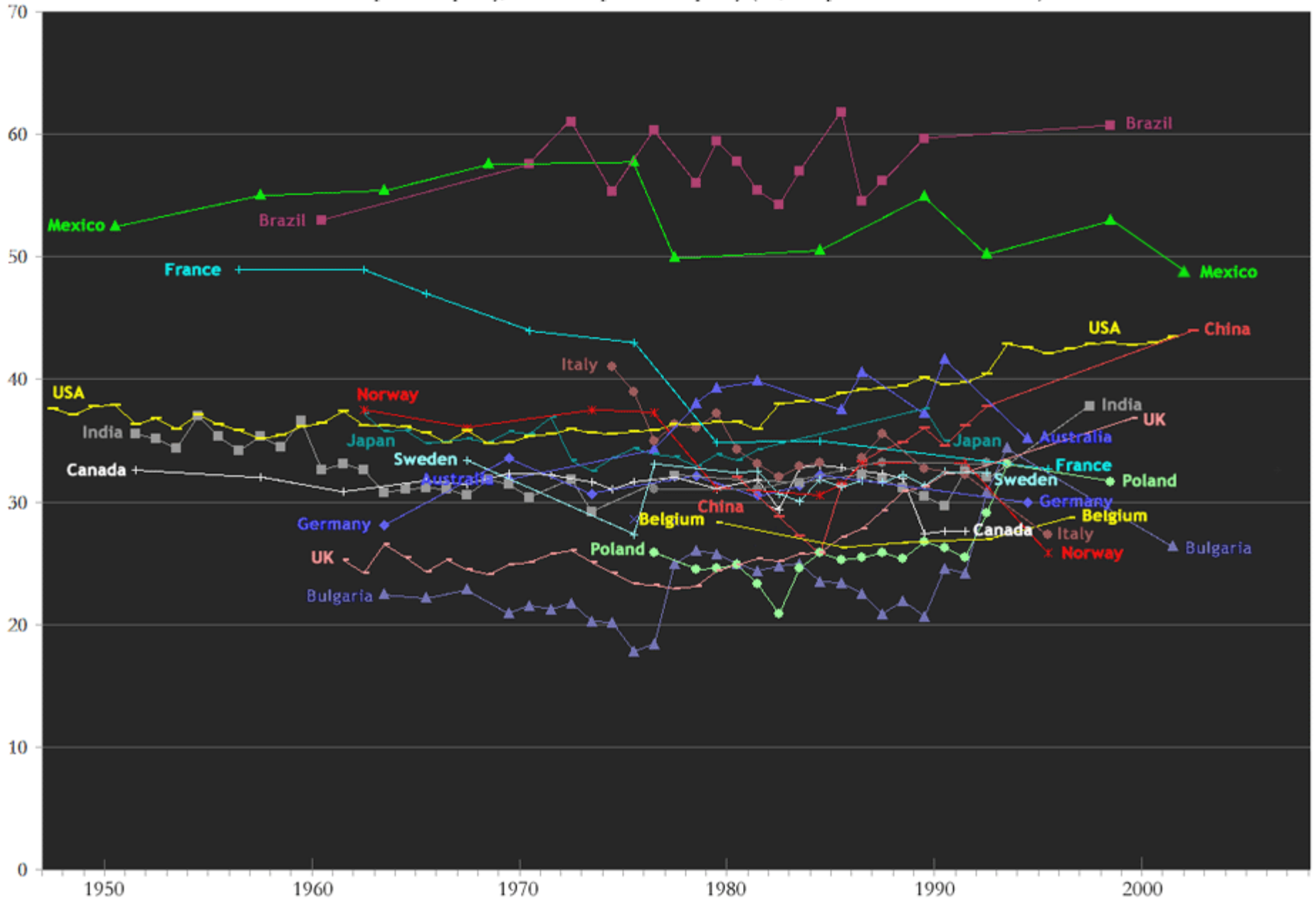
Figure 21: The Top 0.1% Income Share in France, the United States and the United Kingdom



Source: Authors' computations based on income tax returns (France: see Piketty (2001b, table A1, col. P99-100); U.S.: see this paper, table A1, col. P99-100); U.K. See Atkinson (2001).

Income Disparity since World War II – the Gini Index

where 0 is perfect equality, and 100 is perfect inequality (i.e., one person has all the income)



Subjective Class

- When people are asked what class they belong to this is how they answer (GSS 2000)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	LOWER CLASS	142	5.0	5.1	5.1
	WORKING CLASS	1280	45.4	45.7	50.7
	MIDDLE CLASS	1273	45.2	45.4	96.1
	UPPER CLASS	108	3.8	3.9	100.0
	Total	2803	99.5	100.0	
Missing	DK	2	.1		
	NA	12	.4		
	Total	14	.5		
Total		2817	100.0		