Global Stratification & Poverty: Crash Course Sociology #27

Crash Course: Sociology
https://youtube.com/watch?v=6rts_PWIVTU
https://nerdfighteria.info/v/6rts_PWIVTU

You've heard of First World problems, right? Someone cracks a screen on their IPhone or gets the wrong order at Starbucks and they go on Twitter and complain about their #FirstWorldProblems.

So, you've heard the phrase, but have you thought about the implications of talking about countries as "First" or "Third"? Where do these names even come from?

These terms are... outdated, inaccurate and frankly insulting ways of talking about Global Stratification.

So how should we talk about Global Stratification?

===== NewSection (0:27) =====

First, let's deconstruct the idea of the First - Second - Third World hierarchy, see where it came from, and learn what its implications are.

The terms date back to the Cold War when Western policy makers began talking about the world as three distinct political and economic blocks.

Western capitalist countries were labeled as the "First World"; the Sovient Union and its allies were labeled the "Second World"; and then every one else got grouped into "Third World".

After the Cold War ended, the category of "Second World Countries" became null and void. But somehow the terms "First World" and "Third World" stuck around in the public consciousness.

Third World Countries, which started as just a vague catch -all for non-aligned countries, came to be associated with impoverished states, while First World was associated with the rich, industrialized countries.

But in addition to being seriously outdated, these terms are also inaccurate. There are more than 100 countries that fit the label of "Third World," but they have vastly different levels of economic stability. Some are relatively poor, but many aren't.

So lumping Botswana and Rwanda into the same category, for example, doesn't make much sense, because the average income per capita in Botswana is nine times larger than in Rwanda.

Nowadays, sociologists sort countries into groups based on their specific levels of economic productivity. To do this, they use the Gross Domestic Product, or GDP which measures the total output of a country; and the Gross National Income or GNI which measures GDP per capita.

===== NewSection (3:14) =====

High Income Countries are those with GNI above $12,500 per year.

There are 79 countries in this group including the U.S., the U.K., Germany, Chile, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and more. As the name suggests, standards of living are higher here than the rest of the world.

High Income Countries are also highly urbanized, with 81% of people in High Income Countries living in or near cities.

Much of the world's industry in centered in these cities too. And with industry comes money and technology.

Take cellphones, for example. 60% of those in low-income countries have a cellphone. But in high-income countries, not only does almost everyone have a cellphone, but for every 100 people in high-income countries, there are 124 cellphone plans.

===== NewSection (2:40) =====

The next category is the Upper Middle Income Countries, defined as those with GNI between $4,000 and $12,500 per year.

There are 56 countries in this group, and they tend to have advancing economies with both manufacturing and high tech markets. Such as China, Mexico, Russia, and Argentina.

They're also heavily urban, have access to public infrastructure like education and health, and have comfortable standards of living for most citizens. Not too different from what you'd expect in a High Income Country.

Now, you might notice that I keep talking about how "urban" these types of countries are. Why does it matter how many people live in cities?

Well, if you're used to media descriptions of poverty in the U.S., you might think of it as an inner-city problem, but poverty worldwide is mostly rural. Agricultural societies produce less than industrialized ones.

===== NewSection (3:22) =====

Which brings us to our next grouping: Lower Middle Income Countries. These have GNI between $1,000 and $4,000 per year and they include such countries as Ukraine, India, Guatemala, and Zambia.

Unlike the previous groups, only 40% of people living in Lower Middle Income Countries live in urban areas and the economy is based mainly around manufacturing and natural resource production.

Here, access to services like quality health care and education is limited to those who are well-off. For example, the maternal mortality rate is five times higher in Lower Middle Income Countries than it is in Upper Middle Income Countries and one-third of children under the age of 5 are malnourished.

===== NewSection (3:57) =====

Our final grouping includes the 31 countries designated as Low-Income, which have yearly GNI less than $1,000 per year.

These countries are primarily rural. Most of the world's farmers live in these countries and their economies are mainly based on agriculture.

Not only do these countries face income poverty, they also have greater rates of disease, worse healthcare and education systems, and many of their citizens lack access to basic needs like food and

clean water.

Here, 8% of children die before the age of 5, and among older children, more than one third never finish primary school.

This type of poverty is very different from the type of poverty we see in High Income Countries like the United States. That's why when we talk about Social Stratification on a global level, it's important to remember the distinctions between relative and absolute poverty.

Relative poverty exists in all societies, regardless of the overall income level of the society, but absolute poverty is when a lack of resources is literally life-threatening.

===== NewSection (4:42) =====

Let's go to the Thought Bubble to talk about two groups that are particularly vulnerable in Low-Income Countries: children and women.

The results of child poverty range from malnutrition to homelessness to children working in dangerous and illegal jobs. UNICEF estimates that there are 18.5 million children worldwide who are orphans and an estimated 150 million are engaged in child labor.

Child malnutrition is worst in South Asia and Africa, where one third of children are affected and half of all child deaths are attributed to hunger.

Women also make up a disproportionate number of the globally poor. 70% of those living at or below absolute poverty levels worldwide are women.

Some of this is a result of women being kept from working due to religious or cultural beliefs. Some of it is because many women who do work don't get to control the fruits of their labor.

Quite literally, even though women in Low-Income Countries produce 70% of the food, men own the land that the women's labor is done on. 90% of the land in poor countries is owned by men.

And the poverty of children and the poverty of women are connected, specifically by reproductive health care.

Poor access to reproductive health care is part of the reason that birth rates are so much higher in Low-Income Countries.

And less money + more mouths to feed = more child poverty.

Thanks, Thought Bubble.

===== NewSection (5:59) =====

Women and children may be the most vulnerable to global poverty, but poor societies have many problems beyond malnutrition and poor healthcare, including slavery.

You might think of slavery as a problem from long ago. I mean, the U.S. was slow to abolish slavery compared to other Western countries, but slavery is very much alive around the world.

The International Labor Organization estimates that there are at least 20 million men, women, and children currently enslaved.

===== NewSection (6:27) =====

Now, all of these symptoms of global poverty might make you think, "What causes it?".

One likely cause is simply the lack of access to technology. And I'm not talking about like self-driving cars.

Being able to use simple things like fertilizer and modern seeds, for example, can make huge differences for families in Low-Income Countries.

Also, cellphones. The growing number of cellphones in sub-Saharan Africa has increased access to educational tools, banking services, and healthcare resources.

===== NewSection (6:48) =====

Another major cause of global inequalities is population growth. Even with the higher death rates, the high birth rates in lower income countries mean that the population in poor countries double every 25 years, further straining those countries economic resources.

And this is directly related to a third reason for global poverty: gender inequalities.

===== NewSection (7:03) =====

The same cultural and social factors that prevent women from working also tend to limit their access to birth control, which in tern, increases family sizes. And that contributes to population growth and slows economic development as resources become strained.

Social and economic stratification, both within countries and across countries, are also part of the story. Unequal distribution of wealth within a country makes it hard for those stuck in poverty to get out of poverty.

And inequality across nations means that countries with more economic power have historically been able to subjugate less powerful nations through systems like colonialism.

===== NewSection (7:37) =====

Colonialism is the process by which some nations enrich themselves by taking political and economic control of other nations.

Western Europe colonized much of Latin America, Africa, and Asia starting more than 500 years ago and, as a result, much of the wealth and resources flowed out of those regions and into European coffers.

And colonialism isn't some distant past. Most African-British colonies gained their independence in 1968. In other words, the Baby-Boomers that you know were alive when the U.K. still had colonies.

So it's no wonder that so many colonized countries remain Low- or Lower Middle Income when they've only had a little over half a century to begin building their own independent countries.

And, as colonialism fell, new powerful relationships emerged that have made it harder for poorer countries to develop further.

===== NewSection (8:18) =====

Neocolonialism doesn't involve direct political control of a nation; instead it involves economic exploitation by corporations, for example.

Corporate leaders often exert economic pressure on Lower Income Countries to allow them to operate under business conditions that are favorable for the companies and often unfavorable for the citizens that work for them

===== NewSection (8:52) =====

This is all difficult stuff to talk about, but there is good news: global poverty is getting better. Life expectancy is improving rapidly in Low-Income Countries.

Between 1990 and 2012, life expectancy in Low Income Countries has increased by 9 years. And child morality rates halved worldwide in the same period.

How do we keep up this progress?

If we want to tackle global poverty, addressing the social, cultural, and economic forces that keep countries mired in poverty will be the first step.

===== NewSection (8:59) =====

Today, we discussed the terms First and Third World Countries and the reasons those terms are no longer used.

We also went over four types of countries: High Income, Upper Middle Income, Lower Middle Income, and Low Income Countries and the lifestyles of people within those countries.

We talked about some of the consequences of global poverty; including malnutrition, poor education, overpopulation (partially due to poor reproductive healthcare), and slavery.

Finally, we discussed some explanations for global poverty; including technology, gender inequality, social stratification, and global power relationships like colonialism.

Next week, we'll discuss the main theories behind global stratification.

===== NewSection (9:36) =====

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