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SOCIOLOGIST

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## Inequality: Exploitative or Functional?

*Inequality is a social fact in our world. Economic, social, occupational, and educational inequalities shape our fortunes, our destinies, and our dreams. With growing gaps between the rich and the poor in America, the question arises: Should we accept inequality as inevitable—or even functional—or should we resist it as unjust and harmful?*

From a conflict perspective, inequality is not a reflection of talent or effort but the product of structural exploitation. Marx (chapter 1) leads the voices of those troubled by growing inequality. Inequality is not the result of differences in hard work and talents; it is the result of exploitation of the masses by the top 1%. [Systematic injustices](#) against the poor, the homeless, the working class, and even racial minorities point to the ills of inequality, which are baked into capitalism: a system of economic production that extracts value from workers to ensure maximum profit for the capitalists. In this way, inequality breeds alienation, and conflict in society, and [impedes society and democracy](#). Marxists point to the slowing mobility and inability of most of the poor to access education, health, or advance their status. That's you, Team 1.



From a functionalist perspective (Chapter 1), inequality is not only unavoidable but necessary for society to function effectively. Functionalists, such as Davis and Moore argue that societies must ensure that the most important positions—such as doctors, engineers, or leaders—are filled by the most qualified people. [Stratification ensures efficiency in role allocation according to talents and hard work, creates social stability, and in this way benefits society](#). Inequality, then, is part of a meritocratic system that distributes rewards according to talent, skill, and effort. It fosters innovation, ambition, and hard work, contributing to overall stability and progress. Examples of individuals rising “[from rags to riches](#)” demonstrate how inequality can serve as an engine of opportunity, driving both personal achievement and societal benefit (be prepared to cite such examples!). That's you, Team 2.