

American Social Stratification System

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Social Stratification and Class Structure in the United States

This essay aims at explicating the social stratification system of the U.S regarding the social classes. A social stratification system is a system that deals with the categorization or classification of individuals based on socio-economic factors that include social status, gender, education, income, race, power, and wealth (Kerbo, 2017). Every society deals with a particular kind of stratification. The American system of stratification largely depends upon the social classes that refer to the hierarchical groups of individuals according to the socioeconomic factors of the people in the society. The current paper will explore the social stratification system of America, explain some of its functions and dysfunctions, and identify a social problem that arises due to the social differences in the United States.

There are many functions and dysfunctions of this stratification in society. The most important function of [social stratification](#) in America is that it helps in organizing and governing society as compared to the egalitarian systems that focus on equality. Without categorizing society into different groups or classes, there are huge chances for creating conflicts and chaos among the individuals. Another function is that the members of society expect a particular behaviour from every individual according to the class or level they belong to. However, the dysfunction of this system includes the availability of uneven opportunities for attaining social status and power among the members of society. In such systems, the upper classes or the rich people are mostly protected as compared to the lower classes. The upper class mostly gets more social hold and advantages in society in contrast to the lower class. Further, social stratification is one of the main causes of anxiety and stress among people who belong to the lower classes because of low status, prestige, and money (Anderson & Brown 2010).

Upper, Middle, and Working-Class Divisions

Different sociologists have highlighted different social classes in the stratification of America, but the current paper includes the model that has provided four main social classes in this regard (Doob, 2015). At the first point, the peak social class or layer in the country is named the upper class by sociologists. It includes the people who have the highest socioeconomic status in America. This class not only have wealth but all the other socioeconomic factors as well. According to "Leonard Beeghley" the people in America who have incomes of \$1 million are considered in this category. The sociologist has provided two different categories in this class; one is named as rich, and the other is super-rich.

The people who have incomes more than \$1 million are considered super-rich. According to the data it is found that only 1% of people in the country belong to this social class (Kerbo, 2017). A prominent example of an upper-class family is the “Kennedy family” in America.

The second division of the American social structure is the middle class. This class includes people with different levels of education, social status, and wealth. Therefore for a clear understanding of this social class, sociologists have categorized it into upper and lower-middle classes (Beeghley, 2015). The people who belong to the upper-middle class have low status and income as compared to the top layer but are rich from the lower middle class. In the United States, top professionals are mostly considered in this category. On the other hand, the people who belong to the low, middle class have fewer incomes and professions with low status as compared to the upper-middle class (Beeghley, 2015).

The third class in this social structure is the working class which covers more than 25% of families in the country. All the people who work in construction sites, factories, and industries come into this category. This class mostly doesn't have college degrees and focuses more on earning bread for the families. Lastly, the lower class includes 25% of families in the country that are considered poor, and people in this class are mostly unemployed. They usually do not have a degree in high school or any skills. The people from this class lack health care insurance”, adequate diet, and proper housing (Beeghley, 2015).

Inequality, Social Dysfunction, and Emotional Consequences

Different problems occurred among the individuals due to the unequal distribution of power, status, and wealth among different classes. One of the major issues that have been identified in this regard is related to emotional stress and depression among the people of the lower classes. The stratification system of the United States deals with the social disparities and unjust where a particular group holds specific status and power that creates emotional instability among the individuals of the society. The unjust division of power, status, and money largely impacted the lifestyles of the individuals. The people who are categorized in the lower class usually face issues of depression and stress because they cannot get the status and prestige according to their desires (Wilkinson & Pickett 2020).

Emotional anxiety or depression is a social problem that is progressing over time because of the social inequalities in the United States. Due to stratification or social class divisions, the people of the upper class usually exploit their power and status to get their desired objectives. It leads to the accumulation of wealth, prestige, and power in the top layers of stratification, and the poor cannot get any chance to change their lifestyles. Over time, the opportunities for the lower classes are reduced due to the improvements in their living conditions or social status. Further lack of opportunities is progressing social issues such as stress or depression among the lower classes of society in the United States over time (Wilkinson & Pickett 2020).

It is evident from the above arguments that the Stratification system of the United States is based upon social classes and has its functions and dysfunctions. No doubt it helps in organizing and smooth functioning of the society but it also creates certain social issues among individuals. There is a huge need to address such a growing social problem in societies that occurred due to social inequalities in the country. The paper suggests that the issue can be resolved by providing equal opportunities to everyone in society.

References

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