Significance of Age Stratification in Our Society

Posted on September 11, 2018

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Age Stratification and the Social Organization of the Life Course

Age stratification refers to the placement of individuals into groups according to their age status. Age stratification plays an integral role in determining the number of youth, adults, or elderly people in society. We all go through the process of aging. This process is inevitable. Human beings transform from young people to adults to elderly people. However, our society has different ways of treating people in different age groups. People belonging to different age strata are perceived and treated differently.

Adults are considered the most competent people in society. They're paid more as it is believed that they will contribute more to the society they live in. Contrary to this, older people and young people still in their schools and universities are considered to contribute the least to society. They are differentiated from the rest of society. They are even mistreated sometimes. Age stratification helps in understanding how society is divided regarding age groups. Inequalities are revealed through the age stratification system. Age stratification also reveals important figures and information about society. It reveals the number of people belonging to each age group, the number of dependents, and the number of adults or children. The age stratification system helps the government to make important decisions regarding the availability and distribution of resources. If the population has a high number of adults, the government needs to consider initiating more employment opportunities. If the population has many older people, the government must pay more attention to hospitals and medical expenses. In the same way, more universities and schools need to be opened if the population is mostly young. Thus, age stratification plays an integral role in deciding how to allocate resources and reveals important information regarding the age distribution of society. Important decisions can be made through information revealed by the age stratification system.

A lot of research has been done in the field of age stratification and how it reveals critical information regarding inequalities. Age stratification is one way of understanding why people of a particular age group are treated differently. The reason why people belonging to different age groups are oppressed or mistreated may be defined by the way we look at and perceive people of different age groups. A lot of research has been done in this repetitive field. Most of the research is focused on content

stratification rather than approach stratification. Content stratification is relatively simple and straightforward to explain as compared to the approach stratification system. A huge amount of research studies are available to explain the phenomenon of content stratification. Content stratification points out differences based on differences that are determined by age, gender, race, color, background, and culture to which individuals belong. Content stratification explains discrimination by age, race, gender, color, or cultural background. Racial discrimination can be better explained through content stratification. Approach stratification emphasizes power distribution and how differences are made based on the perception of power distribution among different strata. Limited research is available in this field. Approach distribution has a very different way of explaining why the concept of power distribution plays an integral role in how people perceive and treat others. Older people are considered to hold less power than adults having their businesses or jobs; thus, older people are usually considered incompetent members of society. The power distribution concept does not stop here. In workplaces, people with high power and designation are paid more and have higher authority than people with low designation, thus holding less power and authority.

Riley's Theory and the Process of Entering Old Age

The concept of aging and age stratification was first determined by Riley and his colleagues. According to him, aging is a process. This process defines how one enters old age by considering biological changes and psychological developments. Riley also defined aging as a structure. He suggested that aging is all about fitting into different roles in life. Age stratification first defines and conceptualizes aging in terms of structure and process, as defined by Riley. The age and society paradigm explains an important concept about how people of different age groups move across the social structure. These social structures are both age- and time-related. Society and age paradigm explains how people assume different roles with the passage of time and how they perform them. Allocation refers to the designation of special roles to individuals as they age. Socialization is a process that explains how people respond to each role in a particular social structure. Society and age paradigm also explain how social structure, age process, and age cohorts are interdependent (W, 1998).

The age system of inequality defines how young, middle-aged, and older people differ from each other. Each age group in the age strata is defined by biological, psychological, or chronological age. The size and composition of each age stratum are different. Each stratum in the age stratification system differs by age and the extent of the contribution that each particular age group makes to society (McMullin, 2000).

Functionalism, Social Roles, and the Contribution

of Age Groups

Functionalism theories suggest how different parts of society operate to ensure the smooth working of society. Their theories have been developed with this approach. According to functionalism theories, people who are active in the early years of life are more likely to be active citizens in the later years of life. It's easier for active people to transition through different phases of life. Disengagement theory suggests how people withdraw themselves from the society they live in and social relationships. There are three reasons why people do so. The first is that older people assume that they will eventually die. The second reason is that they are neglected and disengaged. The third reason they withdraw themselves from society is that they have difficulty adapting to new roles in life. Activity theory explains how being active and socially involved contributes to the adjustment to new roles as one ages. Continuity theory explains how aging people make choices to maintain an equilibrium and balance between roles and structures by making important decisions regarding their future.

Conflict theory assumes that different social groups have different powers. All social groups are in a relatively unstable society. They compete with one another for power distribution and resource allocations. Modernization theory suggests that older people have lost their power due to technological innovation, modernization, and industrialization. Exchange theories identify how older people, as they become dependent on others, must comply with the will of others for others to accept them. Age stratification theories also fall under conflict theories.

One example that explains how older people are discriminated against is explained by the concept of ageism in healthcare. Usually, doctors and nurses pay less attention to aging people than young ones. However, aging people suffer from more psychological and physical disorders and are at the mercy of others. Another example of how aging people are discriminated against is explained by the unequal distribution of healthcare resources to older people regardless of the fact that societies are aging faster than before. People leave older people in nursing homes. They do not care about them or how much these people need love and affection. Older people are considered a useless part of society.

References

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