

Political science:
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Models of Social Justice and How They Define Equality of Opportunity in US

Most societies have provisions by which they support those among them that are considered vulnerable for one reason or another (Cohen 6). Models of social justice underscore the importance of availing equal opportunity rights to the marginalized members of society (7). The fundamental nature of the philosophy of equality of opportunity lies in the assumption that all individuals are to be treated equally and similarly with no man-made barriers, prejudices or discrimination. Basically, the concept of equal opportunity is about everyone getting or enjoying equal rights. The application of social justice in equality of opportunity recognizes the fact that there could be situations where equal opportunity rules can lead to unequal results especially if they are applied in the context of unequal groups (Rushefsky 12).

In the United States today, the issue of equality of opportunity is quite debatable especially in the consideration of the number of people who are considered to be in the disadvantaged group. This issue can be looked from the viewpoint of philosophical ideas espoused by individuals such as John Locke and Adam Smith. John Locke, a seventeenth century utilitarian, argues that human beings are born with an innate goodness and if they were to pursue their individual happiness, then societal interests would fairly be looked after (Capeheart and Milovanovic 14). This means that equality of opportunity is automatic for everyone, as long as they pursue their personal goals while considering others. In the U. S. this line of thought is not quite applicable because society is very individualistic. Everyone pursues his own personal interests without regard to the others, or without thinking about how his actions may affect those around him. In this society, opportunity is <https://assignbuster.com/political-science-models-of-social-justice-how-they-define-equality-of-opportunity-in-us/>

available only to those who have the capability to fight for it, and this leaves out many people who are not able to fight for the opportunities at the same level as others (Cohen 142).

Adam Smith's philosophy of social justice lays an emphasis on the principle of inequality that is brought about by man himself, and not nature (Brown 35). He also argues that inequality makes the distribution of the social justice system to favor only those who have the power to manipulate it to their own advantage (38). In the U. S. there are many instances of inequality of opportunity since many social structures were created to cater only to those who had the power to use them (Capeheart and Milovanovic 22). Policies and regulations on the distribution of opportunities such as education, jobs, healthcare and others apply equally to everyone. However, since everyone is not equally empowered to make the best use of the opportunities only a few people actually benefit from them (23).

According to the arguments put forth by Locke and Smith, it is clear that although they support the idea of equality of opportunity, they do not consider it to be the same as equality of outcome. Both of the philosophers recognize the presence of external factors that may influence how the notion of equality of opportunity leads, or does not lead to equality of outcome (Brown 43 and Capeheart and Milovanovic 79). In the United States, the Bill of Rights affords all citizens the right to enjoy all opportunities that the country has to offer, However, in reality, not all people are able to enjoy these opportunity (Rushefsky 182). There are some who are too poor to attain the necessary skills to obtain well paying jobs, or to get insurance for healthcare needs or even acquire mortgage to buy a nice house. In other words, poverty is the greatest barrier to Americans who cannot enjoy equal

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outcomes even if their constitution provides for them an equality of opportunity.

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