

Social mobility and status attainment

Sociology



How open is American Society in terms of hierarchy? In an open social system of hierarchy, a person's status is attained through effort and merit as opposed to ethnicity, religion, gender or family background. The hierarchy in the American Society is open social stratification. In this system, social class is achieved by effort and merit, and there exists substantial social mobility between classes. The mobility comes in the form of education and opportunities. The American Society is divided into three social classes based on socioeconomic conditions namely upper, middle and lower classes. The upper class is made up individuals who own the means of production and by extension the private wealth of the country. The middle class is made up of media celebrities and other professionals such as local politicians, lawyers, doctors among others. The middle class comprises about half of the population. The lower class is made up of individuals who can hardly meet their basic needs. It is mainly made up of minority groups (Giddens et al. 135).

Define social mobility.

The dictionary of sociology defines social mobility as the ability of an individual or a household or a person to move either within a tier or across tiers of social hierarchy. The definition is usually associated with an open system of stratification. Individuals do not remain in the same social class. Rather they can move within sub-classes of a social class or from one class to another with variation in their occupation, wealth, and other social variables.

Discuss both downward and upward mobility.

Downward mobility is a type of vertical social mobility in which an individual moves from one upper class to a lower class. The movement is usually

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caused by marriage or changing jobs. High-level individuals convicted of a crime are liable to downward mobility. For example, Bernie Madoff moved from a powerful executive in Wall Street to a prison inmate.

Upward mobility is a type of vertical mobility that involves the movement of an individual from a lower social class to a higher one. Like downward mobility, upward mobility usually occurs when an individual changes jobs or gets married. An example of a person who experienced upward mobility is President Barack Obama. He moved from a middle-class interracial couple's child to become the President of US. (Giddens et al. 165)

What do we mean by status?

Status in Sociology refers to the particular position occupied by an individual in a certain setting. It defines the social position of an individual relative to that occupied by others.

What is the industrial thesis?

The industrial thesis of status is that the employee society is a hierarchical system. The society is based on status and is ruled by status.

Can you go to the top and what can limit you?

It is not practically possible to go up the ladder to the top of the social class. There exist several impediments to upward social mobility. They include stereotypic perceptions, less education and training coupled with difficulty in accessing additional training, and low job perceptions especially for minority groups. An employee from a minority group is considered by his majority counterparts to have attained the position of power due to policy such as affirmative action and not on merit. Such factors limit an individual's ability to go up to the top (Giddens et al. 173).

It is said that education is key to attaining status; is that true and if yes why

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do you think so and if not why do you think not?

Education is to a very great extent key to attaining status. Education is a cause as well as a consequence of status. The level of education an individual has attained defines the perception of the society concerning their social class relative to the level of education of others in the society. In addition, the level of education one gets to attain is dependent on their social class. Individuals with high status in the society can achieve higher levels of education compared to those in lower status (Giddens et al. 176).

What do we mean by intergenerational mobility?

Intergenerational mobility is the movement that occurs across social status for different generations of a given family. For example, President Obama's movement from the social status of his multi-racial middle-class parents to becoming the president of the US represents intergenerational mobility (Giddens et al. 184).

How does affirmative action affect status attainment and is affirmative action fair?

Affirmative action ensures that an individual's personal characteristics are put into consideration in making decisions involving the individual. It ensures that each gets an equal access to opportunities they are qualified for regardless of their personal characteristics such as gender, race, and religious or political affiliation. Affirmative action provides individuals from minority groups in a society with an opportunity for upward mobility. It is fair because it gives individuals who would have otherwise missed an opportunity equal access to the opportunity.

Has affirmative action helped the poor and does education really help the poor?

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Affirmative action has greatly helped the poor in the US. The impact of affirmative action can be seen from the increase in the number of students from minority groups such as women and people of color enrolling and graduating from colleges and universities. Education attained by the poor goes a long way in helping them to attain social status, resulting in intergenerational mobility. There however, exists numerous limitations to this effect.

Have status doors opened up for women and what things still block women's attainment of higher status?

Status doors have opened for women. The number of women of high status has been on the increase over the years. Over 40% of individuals in the upper social class in the US are women. However, there are several things that block the attainment of higher status by women. They include stereotypes and preconceptions about women's suitability for high positions of leadership, inflexible work schedules and the lack of programs that would enable women to balance their work and non-work responsibilities.

What things in society stand in the way of improved status for different groups and what are the causes for reduced status?

There are four main groups of people in the society depending on their level of years. In the foundation years stage, the already established and inherited variations in ability for children acts as an impediment to improved status. In the school years stage, the primary limitation is the environment and supportive factors in a child's development of competencies. In the transition, years stage the main limitation is the choices made in transiting from education to jobs. In the adulthood stage the constraints are low qualifications and little incentives welfare systems. The major causes of

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reduced status among the groups include the lack of adequate fairness policy and the existence of challenges in implementation of policies to improve the status.

What are the social functions of stratification and are all societies stratified? Give a structural functionalist analysis and contrast it with a conflict theorist analysis of stratification. How would a social interactions view status attainment?

Social stratification exists in every society. It encourages hard work, promotes the circulation of elites, acts as an economic function, prevents resource waste and helps in the stabilization and reinforcement of attitudes and skills.

Functionalist analysis of social stratification contends that people's actions are not always informed by economic self-interest. It further suggests that through hard work, people who want to succeed can achieve their objective. In contrast, conflict theorist analysis of stratification argues that capitalist economic competition by individuals gives unfair privileges to the rich. Those rich people have the power to promote an unfair system that functions to their gain.

A social interactions view of status attainment makes reference to social resource open to an individual that helps the individual to attain a given social status. It considers these resources as social capital to achieve a better status. In addition, it holds that the social capital is contingent on the initial position of the individual in the social hierarchies (Giddens et al. 233).

Works cited

Giddens, Anthony et al. Introduction to Sociology. WW Norton New York, 2014. Google Scholar. Web. 9 Mar. 2015.

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