

Social inequality and minorities



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Social Inequality and Minorities in the United States In this course I have learned about many different kinds of social problems in societies around the world and in the United States, such as poverty, social inequality, race and cultural discrimination, gender stratification, environmental damage, population growth, and urbanization. I chose my final essay to be on Social Inequality and Minorities in the United States. For me this subject raises many points of our daily life and brings us to the point of reality in our world. My paper will discuss why is deviance found in all societies? How does who and what are defined as deviant reflect social inequality? What effect has punishment had in reducing crime in the United States? Let's start off with what are social inequities and what is minorities? Social inequality refers to a lack of social equality, where individuals in a society do not have equal social status. Areas of potential social inequality include voting rights, freedom of speech and assembly, the extent of property rights and access to education, health care and other social goods.

Inequality is socially created by matching two different kinds of processes. The social roles in society are first matched to 'reward packages' of unequal value and individual members of society are then allocated to the positions so defined and rewarded" Social inequality is different from economic inequality but the two inequalities are linked. Economic inequality refers to disparities in the distribution of economic assets and income. While economic inequality is caused by the unequal distribution of wealth, social inequality exists because the lack of wealth in certain areas prohibits these people from obtaining the same housing, health care, etc. s the wealthy in societies where access to these social goods depends on wealth.

“ The degree of inequality in a given reward or asset depends, of course, on its dispersion or concentration across the individuals in the population”.

(Dictionary. com) I also feel economic inequalities goes well with these examples before I go further..... Economic inequality refers to disparities in the distribution of economic assets and income. The term typically refers to inequality among individuals and groups within a society, but can also refer to inequality among nations. Economic Inequality generally refers to equality of outcome, and is related to the idea of equality of opportunity.

It is a contested issue whether economic inequality is a positive or negative phenomenon, both on utilitarian and moral grounds. Economic inequality has existed in a wide range of societies and historical periods; its nature, cause and importance are open to broad debate. A country’s economic structure or system (for example, capitalism or socialism), ongoing or past wars, and differences in individuals’ abilities to create wealth are all involved in the creation of economic inequality. The existence of different genders, races and cultures within a society is also thought to contribute to economic inequality. Some psychologists such as Richard Lynn argue that there are innate group differences in ability that are partially responsible for producing race and gender group differences in wealth (see also race and intelligence, sex and intelligence) though this assertion is highly controversial.

The idea of the gender gap tries to explain differences in income between genders. Culture and religion are thought to play a role in creating inequality by either encouraging or discouraging wealth-acquiring behavior, and by providing a basis for discrimination. In many countries individuals belonging to certain racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to be poor. Proposed

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causes include cultural differences amongst different races, an educational achievement gap, and racism. Now let's take a look at minorities' definition as I thought was the best way to describe as a minority or subordinate group is a sociological group that does not constitute a politically dominant voting majority of the total population of a given society. A sociological minority is not necessarily a numerical minority — it may include any group that is disadvantaged with respect to a dominant group in terms of social status, education, employment, wealth and political power.

To avoid confusion, some writers prefer the terms “ subordinate group” and “ dominant group” rather than “ minority” and “ majority”, respectively. In socioeconomics, the term “ minority” typically refers to a socially subordination ethnic group (understood in terms of language, nationality, religion and/or culture). Other minority groups include people with disabilities, “ economic minorities” (working poor or unemployed), “ age minorities” (who are younger or older than a typical working age) and sexual minorities. The term “ minority group” often occurs alongside a discourse of civil rights and collective rights which gained prominence in the 20th century. Members of minority groups are prone to different treatment in the countries and societies in which they live. This discrimination may be directly based on an individual's perceived membership of a minority group, without consideration of that individual's personal achievement.

It may also occur indirectly, due to social structures that are not equally accessible to all. Activists campaigning on a range of issues may use the language of minority rights, including student rights, consumer rights and animal rights. In recent years, some members of social groups traditionally

perceived as dominant have attempted to present themselves as an oppressed minority, such as white, middle-class heterosexual males. Every large society contains ethnic minorities. They may be migrant, indigenous or landless nomadic communities. In some places, subordinate ethnic groups may constitute a numerical majority, such as Blacks in South Africa under apartheid.

International criminal law can protect the rights of racial or ethnic minorities in a number of ways; the right to self-determination is a key issue.

(Dictionary. com) As many of us know social inequalities and minorities are the discrimination of our world. We class and judge all types of minorities; even though we all know we should not we still peruse others falsely and judgmentally. Treatment or consideration based on class or category rather than individual merit; partiality or prejudice: racial discrimination.

Unfortunately this is something that Americans deal with every day. Whether it is at school, at work or even in a public space, racial discrimination has been haunting our nation for hundreds of years now. There are many factors that go into determining the path a person's life may take; the most significant of these is the social class into which he or she is born. Every modern society has a class society. Each of these societies has based its civilization, its culture, its technology, on the oppression of the majority by a minority.

Class is vitally important in understanding social inequalities suffered globally by the races which comprise our world, but also it extends more specifically into the different ethnicities which comprise a race. Why is

deviance found in all societies? Although we tend to view deviance as the free choice or personal failings of individuals, all behavior—deviance as well as conformity—is shaped by society. Deviance varies according to cultural norms. No thought or action is inherently deviant; it becomes deviant only in relation to particular norms. Around the world, deviance is even more diverse. Albania outlaws any public display of religious faith, such as “crossing” oneself; Cuba and Vietnam can prosecute citizens for meeting with foreigners; Malaysia does not allow tight-fitting jeans for women; police in Iran can arrest a woman simply for wearing makeup.

People become deviant as others define them that way. Everyone violates cultural norms at one time or another. For example, have you ever walked around talking to yourself or “borrowed” a pen from your workplace? Whether such behavior defines us as criminal or mentally ill depends on how others perceive, define, and respond to it. Both norms and the way people define situations involve social power. The law is the means by which powerful people protect their interests. A homeless person who stands on a street corner speaking out against the government risks arrest for disturbing the peace; a mayoral candidate during an election campaign does exactly the same thing and gets police protection.

In short, norms and how we apply them reflect social inequality. How does who and what are defined as deviant reflect social inequality? The social-conflict approach links deviance to social inequality. That is, who or what is labeled “deviant” depends on which categories of people hold power in a society. Social-conflict theory explains this pattern in three ways.

First, all norms and especially the laws of any society generally reflect the interests of the rich and powerful. People who threaten the wealthy, either by taking their property or by pushing for a more egalitarian society, are labeled “ common thieves” or “ political radicals. Karl Marx, a major architect of the social-conflict approach, argued that the law (and all social institutions) supports the interests of the rich; or as Richard Quinney puts it, “ Capitalist justice is by the capitalist class, for the capitalist class, and against the working class”. Second, even if their behavior is called into question, the powerful have the resources to resist deviant labels.

The majority of the corporate executives involved in recent scandals have yet to be arrested; very few have gone to jail. Third, the widespread belief that norms and laws are natural and good masks their political character. For this reason, although we may condemn the unequal application of the law, most of us give little thought to whether the laws themselves are inherently unfair (Quinney, 1977). What effect has punishment had in reducing crime in the United States? When asked this question the first thing I thought of was the four justification of punishment in our text book. Which is Retribution The oldest justification for punishment? Punishment is society’s revenge for a moral wrong.

In principle, punishment should be equal in severity to the deviance itself; deterrence an early modern approach. Deviance is considered social disruption, which society acts to control. People are viewed as rational and self-interested; deterrence works because the pain of punishment outweighs the pleasure of deviance. Rehabilitation a modern strategy linked to the development of social sciences. Deviance is viewed as the result of social

problems (such as poverty) or personal problems (such as mental illness). Social conditions are improved; treatment is tailored to the offender's condition.

Societal protection is a modern approach easier to carry out than rehabilitation. If society is unable or unwilling to rehabilitate offenders or reform social conditions, people are protected by the imprisonment or execution of the offender. Currently, 2 million people are imprisoned in the United States. In response to tougher public attitudes and an increasing number of drug-related arrests, the U. S.

prison population has tripled since 1980. The size of the inmate population is going up in most other high-income nations as well. Yet the United States imprisons a larger share of its population than any other country in the world. Certainly, punishment deters some crime.

Yet our society has a high rate of criminal recidivism, later offenses by people previously convicted of crimes. About three-fourths of state prisoners have been jailed before, and about half will be back within a few years after release. So does punishment really deter crime? Only about one-third of all crimes are known to police; of these, only about one in five results in an arrest. The old saying “crime doesn't pay” rings hollow when we consider these statistics. As we can certainly see social inequalities are in each of our lives as well as our judicial system and there are still many discriminatory differences in the United States. Knowing what is right and wrong in these circumstances makes us knowledgeable in making a difference in the world.

Minorities and social inequalities are a part of who we are as a society. It is what we built around us. We all have our thoughts on what makes discrimination harmful, I truly feel it is up to us to change our social inequalities and minorities