

Social stratification analysis



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In understanding human beings and human societies, no subject is more important than social stratification and its relationship with wages. A system of social stratification helps shape how people live, their opportunities for a better life, their mental health and how long they will live. Generally it is a system of social stratification has an important influence on events like wages, unemployment and inflation. Most people know that some people are rich and some are poor, but people in general are usually not aware of the systematic social forces that create the outcome of where they are placed on the ladder or why they are paid what they are.

Most believe they take what they get. This type of belief is strong among the nonpoor and white of the United States and in recent times with immigration. Employers of immigrants will pay less, even less than minimum wages because of that person is illegal. Most people are unaware of the fact that some individuals have more influence than others that can shape the general social welfare. Those people usually are the least aware of how a system of stratification forms the basis for these influences and this is a possible factor in why wages follows social stratification differences. To begin we need to define the difference between social differential and social stratification.

Social differential is a necessary precondition for social stratification. Social differential is the distinct individual qualities and social roles. This is very important when looking at reasons for unequal pay in American Society. People are differentiated by biological characteristics such as sex, size, strength, and agility.

In every society they are differentiated by social roles, work tasks, or occupations. Some people do the hunting others chop wood and others care for children or gather plants. As societies become more complex technologically, the division of labor increases the number of tasks, occupations, and roles will grow too. An increased division of labor means more differentiation. Several arguments for unequal pay include the differences between men and women as reasons. It stated that women live longer than men so they should be paid less to balance this out.

Another said that women were more likely to have tardiness and absences which added to labor cost and in order to balance this out women are paid less. Health care and medical insurance costs needs to become more balanced because women live longer and can become pregnant life (Barber, 1957). Social inequality is the condition that people have unequal access to valued resources, services and positions in the society. Such inequality can come in terms of wages and how individuals or groups are themselves ranked and evaluated by others most importantly; social inequality in wages is related to differing positions in a social structure. Social inequality often rises from social differentiation for two reasons. First because of the human capacity to apply meaning to events and things and to develop judgment of what is good or bad, social evaluation is often applied to differences.

This could explain why the wages are unequal across the board. Individual characteristics and different positions or roles may be valued unequally or ranked from superior to inferior that is why social inequality is looked at in terms of prestige or honor for more pay. Inequality may rise from social differentiation because of some roles or social positions place some people in

a position to acquire a greater share of valued goods, services and pay (Giddins & Held, 1982). Two of the most important types of inequality are inequalities of income and wealth. These two are of major importance because it is income and wealth that bring other valued goods and services, not to mention the basic necessities of life. Income and wealth are generalized commodities that depending upon the quantity and how they are used by bring power and influence.

By income I mean money, wages and payments that are timely made and received as returns from a job or investment. Income is usually the means by which most Americans obtain the necessities and simple luxuries of life. A wage or salary, rather than investments, is what sustains the vast majority of people in this country. Wealth is accumulated assets in the form of various types of valued goods. Wealth is anything of economic value that is bought and sold.

Most Americans have little or no wealth, whatever they have gotten in the form of wages and salaries cannot be saved because it must be used for immediate necessities. Read about Gulliver's travels Income is distributed in a highly unequal manner in this country, but wealth is distributed even more unevenly (Liao, 2006). The majority of people in this country must depend upon some type of employment for their income and the occupational structure is of primary importance in creating this unequal distribution of income.

Part of the inequity between men and women is due to simple sexism. The standard of living and real income of people in the United States have

generally increased over the years. But the distribution of total income has remained stable since the middle 1940's. There is data showing that income inequality was reduced somewhat during the 1930's and early 1940's due to Depression reforms and full employment during World War II. Among noncommunist industrial nations the United States can generally be ranked about midway in terms of income inequality.

France is the highest amount of income inequality(Barber, 1957). The most commonly recognized class inequality is income. The usual assumption is that working class people receive below average incomes, the middle class receives average incomes, and the upper middle class professionals and managers receive above average to high incomes. The more traditional assumptions about class income inequalities are much closer to the truth. This is the belief that working class people have made substantial income gains relative to the middle class is incorrect because of two facts. That high working class incomes are not your typical income and also that even though some blue collar workers pay is high it is usually because of it being seasonal or insecure (Giddins & Held, 2006).

There is no simple explanation between income and class position because of the many variables that help determine income attainment. The first problem has been that in the past occupational status or occupational skill level alone was assumed to indicate class position. There is no argument that much of the income inequality between men and women or whites and minorities can be explained by the historical conditions of racism and sexism in our society. But much of this race and sex discrimination operates through

the established class system. Income inequality in general is related to positions within authority structures.

So if we find sex and race differences in relation to these other factors affecting income inequality in general we have located other sources of sex and race inequality operating through the class system (Hulme & Toye, 2006). The main point is that race and sex income inequality is explained by class, although racism and sexism do play a part. Race and sex inequality are in large part class issues and operate through class divisions made up of occupational, authority, and property divisions in the overall system of stratification in this country. As with income the condition of work is stratified.

Those on top are generally better off, while those in the middle can look down upon those at the bottom with a feeling that their own condition could be worse. Income inequalities, job satisfaction, conditions of work, and different amounts of political and economic power are the most important consequences of class in the United States (Rimashevskaja & Kislitsyna, 2006). A central belief in the conflict perspective of social stratification is that groups with strong common interests will work together to ensure that these common interests are attained and maintained. This is true for groups on the bottom as well as for those on top. But this is only true to the extent that a group with common interests is able to recognize its common interests, and has resources with which to gain its common interest. Those on the top of the stratification system are usually able to have both of what was mentioned.

But those that are below the top are usually powerless, passive or non participants in the conflict process of reward distribution in the society (Barber, 1957). The global view of social stratification shows that it is in many ways similar to domestic systems of stratification. There are some differences between the two types of systems. For one the phenomenon of nationalism can produce less international class unity and more of an overt class conflict between the core and the outside. It is more difficult to maintain the world stratification system through ideological justifications because of cultural differences and communication differences. But it can be seen as a property structure and occupational division of labor that stretches around the globe that isn't related to bureaucratic authority structures.

One should note that it isn't the differences domestically and globally on social stratification it is the similarities that are surprising (Hulme & Toye, 2006).