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SOCIETY AND POOR'S: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The study of social shifts is central too much of sociology's theoretical framework. Although social theorists have seldom addressed poverty directly, their insights on the economic ordering and structure of society are useful for gaining perspective on the issue. In their writings set in Victorian Britain, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels highlighted the chasm between the working class, who owned nothing except their labour, and the capitalist class, who owned the means of production and exploited the working class for profit. Writing around the dawn of the twentieth century, sociologist Max Weber highlighted the significance of power, position, and prestige in maintaining dominating relations in addition to economic considerations in creating and maintaining inequality. Conversely, Emile Durkheim argued that social stratification serves a necessary purpose for a functioning society. There are at least implicit, echoes of these early theoretical notions in contemporary sociological thought. Understanding poverty from a sociological vantage point was the primary emphasis of this review, which examined several sociological ideas and concepts, related to the topic.

KEY WORDS: Society, Poor, Labour, Class, Difference

INTRODUCTION

The relative relevance of social institutions and human activity in understanding the occurrence and maintenance of poverty across time has been the focus of much sociological thought on poverty, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. There is a deep historical root to the social and political tendency to label some groups as being at fault for their own plight. Certain popular and political narratives, as well as some scholarly investigations, have placed blame for poverty on the actions of individuals, on their claimed lack of initiative or moral turpitude. There has been considerable speculation that the welfare system actively fosters and rewards reliance among its recipients. Additional contemporary iterations of similar concepts attribute poverty to inherently unworkable cultures, problematic families, or generations of nonworking parents. As a result, sociologists have been eager to employ scientific data to counter the prevailing, subjective, and psychological accounts of poverty. They argue that the wider environment and the kind of options available to people are more

crucial to understanding and explaining poverty than people's particular behaviours and decisions. It can be challenging to distinguish poverty from associated factors, such as unemployment or assistance receipt, due to the strong correlation between poverty and human behaviour. This is especially true in certain recent political and popular discourse, which fails to account for the fact that not all individuals without jobs are impoverished and vice versa. To present poverty as an issue produced by people suffering it is connected to the tendency to equate poverty with other social difficulties, such as unemployment, welfare receipt, or substance misuse, or to cite these situations as causes for poverty without critical evaluation. This attitude is reflective of a larger cultural trend toward minimising the effects of poverty. From a sociological and theoretical vantage point, this research explores a number of competing frameworks for thinking about poverty. What it turns up is that;

- Some sociologists have suggested that poverty is best understood as a result of how resources and opportunities are unequally distributed across society, while others have sought to explain poverty by pointing to people's moral faults, fecklessness, or dependent cultures.
- Although some sociologists have noted a diminishing impact of social class in the UK, studies have shown that social class and mechanisms of class reproduction continue to play a significant role in shaping individuals' possibilities.
- For a sociologically informed comprehension of poverty, social stigma and shame are highlighted.
- Institutional factors, such as public or welfare delivery systems' preconceived notions about the poor, have also been demonstrated to have a significant role in further marginalizing and stigmatizing the poor.

KEY POINTS

- Considerations from a sociological perspective investigate the connections between societal organisation and dynamics like crime and poverty.
- To better understand the causes of poverty, sociologists have sought to strike a balance between the influence of social structures (the way a society is organised) and the importance of individual agency (the decisions and acts of its members).
- Sociologists study inequality because it provides a window into the functioning of society as a whole.
- It has been common for certain sociologists, especially those writing in the 1970s and 1980s, to attribute low incomes to the moral faults, laziness, or dependence cultures of the poor. Some have claimed that the unequal distribution of wealth and opportunity in our society is the key to comprehending poverty.
- Social class is losing its sway in the UK, according to some academics. However, studies have demonstrated that social class and mechanisms of class reproduction remain significant, especially for the transmission of poverty from one generation to the next.
- Sociologists, however, have noted the centrality of social shame and stigma to any analysis of poverty. One area of concern is the stigmatisation that surrounds the spending habits of the poorest people.
- Evidence also points to the role that institutions like public or welfare delivery systems have in perpetuating unfavourable stereotypes of people in poverty and further marginalising them.
- To a considerable extent, people's social class positions still determine the possibilities offered to them. Being born into poverty increases the likelihood that you will remain poor throughout your life.

POVERTY AND THE 'UNDESERVING POOR'

Most sociologists think that there is a correlation between economic status and social class, which is why this idea is so often used in the field. It has been suggested that the lines between socioeconomic groups have blurred in recent years, making them less predictive of actual living conditions and opportunities. The possibilities for forming one's identity, it has been said, have expanded and become more in line with personal preference than they were in the past. Some might say that people are more in charge of their own lives now than ever before. People's purchasing and consumption habits are frequently regarded as an important way in which they may express their uniqueness and forge their own identities. However, consumption has emerged as an increasingly significant means of social differentiation and stratification. People living in poverty may not be able to afford to engage in socially acceptable forms of consuming. In addition, persons living in extreme poverty are typically stigmatised for their spending habits and patterns by the larger society. Though having more purchasing power may seem to provide people more leeway to shape their lives and identities in accordance with their tastes and goals, this gap between classes is often reinforced and even widened. Furthermore, social status remains a significant effect on many, if not all, areas of people's life, such as opportunities for advancement in one's career or access to certain types of leisure time pursuits.

POVERTY, STIGMA AND SHAME

There is a strong correlation between poverty and feelings of shame and stigma. The employment of specific terminology, labels, and imagery about what it means to live in poverty contributes to the stereotyping of poor people as "the other." All levels and sectors of society participate in these activities. Those in the welfare industry, for instance, may incorrectly attribute high rates of unemployment to flaws in applicants' personalities or actions. This is a way of making snap judgments on people who are already in a disadvantageous position. Although these terms are frequently used to describe folks in poverty by others who are not in that situation, those who are poor themselves may internalise and perpetuate these labels. As a result of the social pressure to hide their poverty, people in low-income situations often experience this.

CAPITALISM AND THE CHANGING LABOUR MARKET

Working has been praised as the greatest way to escape poverty by several countries for quite some time now. Although having a job used to be sure-fire methods to avoid poverty, the current state of the economy and the nature of labour has rendered this hopeless. Many people are already experiencing worsening working circumstances as a result of the present economic climate, which has also seen a significant reduction in public sector positions, an increase in unemployment and underemployment, and a proliferation of low-paying and part-time labour. Poor work, as low-wage jobs are colloquially known, has become increasingly common in today's labour market. Those nations whose economies are founded on staunch free-market ideals are especially vulnerable. Therefore, poverty within the working class is gaining prominence as an explanation for modern poverty.

CONCLUSION

The study of sociology provides a useful framework for analysing economic hardship. By "thinking sociologically," we can increase our understanding of societal concerns and challenges. It enables us to see individual problems in the context of societal economic and political structures, and to examine those structures and problems with a critical eye. Misconceptions and half-truths about poverty permeate both the public and political

discourse. By applying sociological reasoning, we may be able to untangle poverty from a host of related notions and less-than-charitable discussions of a wide range of societal ills. The topic of growing inequality has received more airtime as of late. In the current setting, economic disparity is widening, with a tiny percentage of the population amassing vast fortunes while the vast bulk of the population struggles under rising poverty rates. Much of the sociological research that was looked at for this study focused on the perpetuation of (social class) inequality. Most Britons believe in meritocracy and think hard effort is the best way to move ahead in life, but most also acknowledges that money may buy opportunity. However, there is no proof of genuine opportunity parity. By situating these questions within a framework of inequality (and equality), we are able to give greater consideration to the persistence of social class and its connection to material deprivation. It's not by luck that nations with low rates of relative income poverty also prioritise fairness. An increasing focus on personal accountability and behaviour, as argued for by sociological theory, may obscure class inequalities and the significance of opportunity frameworks. Despite this, people's backgrounds continue to strongly affect the paths they take in life. Beginning life on the lower economic rung increases the likelihood that you will remain there.

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