

Social stratification occurs when inequality becomes the social norm and institutionalized.<sup>1</sup> It is evident in today's society that there is a strong inequality between the distribution of resources and opportunities available to the different communities and groups in America. All of these resources provided allowed me the opportunity to dive into this topic and open my eyes. After reading chapter 4 in *Race Relations* and going over the notes "Dominant Group Initial Contact with Dominated Groups," I realized that the problem of discrimination/segregation of American blacks and whites stems from the first contact of the minority group in the country. African's motives for entering the country were different from those who came looking for a better life. They never entered the country voluntarily. From the point of first contact in the 1600s, African Americans were thought of as something to be controlled. For most other races and minority groups, they were entering the country in order to leave behind a life they deemed less fortunate than the American Dream.<sup>1</sup> Blacks have always been in a dominated position in society. Secondly, in the article "The United States of Inequality," I realized that the problem continues due to political and economic reasons. It explains how income distribution has taken another hit. Unlike the mid 1900's, our middle class is deteriorating while the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Tritch explains how our government continues progress this separation by going against every mechanism, which narrowed the inequality in the past.<sup>2</sup> In the video "Wealth Inequality in America," the speaker expressed how this could be corrected by having a mixture of economies. The United States needs to stray from the extreme of complete socialism and the other extreme capitalism that exists today.<sup>3</sup> Lastly, it's very evident that our problems with social stratification cannot be fixed overnight. In the video "Wealth Inequality in America," it is expressed how there is a severe gap between perceptions and reality of the problems that occur economically and socially. While Americans recognize that a problem exists in the distribution of wealth, they do not see or fully acknowledge how large these gaps are. It was shocking to me even to see the distribution conveyed in such a way. Until people are more aware that there is a problem, we cannot reach success in correction.<sup>3</sup>

Currently, our society seems to be in an uprising of brutality, both against the police and against the African American community. It is obvious that there is racial discrimination coming from both sides. I believe that the notes give some insight into why these events could be occurring. These instances of violence are occurring in minority communities. "White society is deeply implicated in the ghetto," is a quote from the notes that really touched me. From the time of slavery till even now to a lesser extent, the black population has been limited to certain areas. While in the 60's and 70's the government tried to correct the wealth divide and offer aid (Welfare) to the oppressed, their actions weren't as helpful as intended. Offering government funded public housing in only certain areas allowed the dominant (white) community to drive segregation, meso-segregation. The areas offered only served to confine them to the minority communities. Those trying to better themselves were never offered the opportunity to move to white neighborhoods.<sup>4</sup> Although there have been many voucher programs to date trying to eliminate these issues, it is obvious today that these same communities were never completely desegregated. On top of the African American community being discriminated against and forced into a society with limited resources of their own, whites have integrated themselves into their society. Whites hold the power positions, such as

government and police departments that govern and control their activities.<sup>4,5</sup> With all of this discrimination, animosity towards those oppressing is bound to occur. With today's increasing levels of poverty in these regions, there has been an increasing amount of violence. It seems that every day there is a news story communicating another police shooting.

Domestic colonialism is defined as “a form of inequality institutionalized contact and resembles a master-servant, paternalistic relationship.”<sup>1</sup> While there isn't slavery today to represent this “master-servant” affiliation, this idea still exists in today's society. It is being realized in the recent occurrences. As described above, whites hold positions of power in these primarily minority communities. Hatred towards those representing the idea of segregation causes a mistrust and lack of respect towards the police. There are unquestionably members of these organizations that racially discriminate and profile the black population. These shootings are the result of a build up of years of mistreatment. I believe that history is repeating itself. The riots that are occurring today are too similar to those from the late 60's.

The domination model explains how there is a dominant white group and minority groups who are deemed inferior.<sup>1</sup> This model uses three mechanisms to show the perpetuation of this idea. These include the use of stereotypes, legal means, and isolation. All of these are evident in today's society and are being portrayed well in all of the incidences happening now. While we don't like to admit, there are stereotypes that portray African Americans as more violent and not abiding to the law. One example is the experiment done in the video “What Would You Do? Bike Theft.” Two men who were to appear the same (same clothes and same action) and only differed by race, were treated completely different.<sup>6</sup> The way in which social stratification is perpetuated by legal means isn't as deep as laws stating these groups have to live in a certain area anymore. However, there are ways our current system is keeping blacks deprived and in concentrated areas. Welfare and government aid are limited in ways that give no hope. Isolation goes hand in hand with this issue when geographic segregation initiated by the dominant group regenerates the cycle of poverty within this group.

Due to my social status as a middle-class white woman who has been given opportunities to succeed in this society, such as ample resources growing up and the chance to attend college, it is hard to understand the upbringing and hardship of those different from me. This section of the course and assignment has allowed me to start understanding some of these problems that plague our communities today. It's obvious that equality has not yet been accomplished between blacks and whites. Segregation continues for the African American community, which creates opinions and views that the dominant group only serves to keep the inferior oppressed. I'm not sure if there is a way to fix this social stratification and our nation cannot seem to figure out a solution. The article that really spoke to me was “The Faces of American Power.” I had never realized the extent to which whites really dominated society.<sup>5</sup> Ever since President Obama was elected eight years ago, I guess I figured there had been a shift in this divide. However, after seeing this article and the presentation of the faces of power, it is clear we haven't made any progress as a country in eliminating the segregation that is still real.

References:

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