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HSP 402

### Final Paper

“Compare and Contrast class-ism related to socioeconomic stratification and how it is reflected in political ideologies that affect human services.”

According to *Contemporary Political Ideologies*, the idea of social stratification is how a society ranks groups within it (Sargent, 2009, pp.16). The idea of class according to Sargent, often has to do with ethnicity, gender and race (2009, pp. 26). When comparing these two terms both separate people into groups. If someone was to ask me what class I am a part of, I would probably answer something like: I am a white, middle class, female. My answer would combine both my class and socioeconomic status. This way of describing one's self seems to be common in America. Placing labels like this is common within the Human Services field. Many services are based on economic need because of this people who make too much do not qualify, thus creating stratification.

The government runs many social services that are open to a wide range of citizens; therefore, these agencies are subject to the political atmosphere. Americans tend to vote for the people they think will represent their best interest, so those who are receiving social services are more likely to vote for a candidate who says they will provide funding toward these services. Those who are not receiving funding from these agencies are not likely to care about this issue. These stratifications cause differing political ideologies. “Most of us tend to think of ourselves as having multiple identities based on our ‘unique’ combination of class” (Sargent, 2009, pp.26). Therefore it can be thought that people in similar classes will share similar political ideologies.

As I feel I am part of the white, middle class there is a good chance I will share similar political ideologies with other who feel they are in the same standing.

“Analyze organizational structures and design processes to initiate and sustain organizational change.”

In chapter nine, of the Organizational Development book it talks about the steps for positive organizational change. Identifying issues is one of the first steps to organizational change. The idea of “Elevation of Inquiry” is a lens to look at organizational issues through a positive view. Bringing up commonalities and solutions rather than allowing the system to continue as it is (Cooperrider & Selekra, 2006).

“Relatedness to Others” is the view that since everyone is working together to initiate this change than each person has strengths that can be brought. “Participants in the inquiry begin to name and honor one another’s uniqueness and specialties, which generates a process of language development and continues sharing” (Cooperrider & Selekra, 2006, pp.234). By creating a dialogue that is positive based the negative view that often comes with conflict is counteracted. It creates a community idea – valuing each person’s portion of the change.

By valuing each person’s portion, it then becomes more about working with each other strengths to create change; this is the “Fusion of Strengths” stage. With the group more focused on what positives can come from change and how each person has a piece of the change, it then causes the group to bring the strengths together to be proponents of change.

“As members experience the activation of group energy, they leave their perceptions of constraint behind” (Cooperrider & Selekra, 2006, pp. 236). Because each person has had an equal say in the change and has been recognized as being needed to affect the change; the group

dynamic is much more positive. They have each felt needed and are willing to work together to make a sustainable change.

“Describe the relationships between human services agencies, political structures, political ideologies and socio economic class.”

When looking at human service agencies, political structure, political ideologies, and socio economic class it is best to see them as interconnected systems. Human services agencies are affected by the other three. Take for instance the idea of communism. In this structure, everyone is apart of the same socio economic status. This uniform class determines the political ideology and this determines the political structure. The way the political system is set up then determines what human services agencies are needed. “Democracy is tough-minded, not utopian” (Fuller, 2004, pp. 93). In America we have a “democratic” system that is run by capitalism. This system is more like a pyramid, where the wealth is contained by the top portion and then trickles down to the bottom. The political ideologies that run the country are contained in the top socio economic status. These people are able to help fund candidates that agree with their way of thinking and get them into office. What this means for Human Service agencies is that the funding that many agencies get from government run programs are being determined by those who do not receive the services. In the end, these systems all affect each other because socio economic classes help determine political ideologies. The top socio economic class then funds those who support their interests in to the political structure and the political atmosphere determines what Human Services agencies are considered valuable and worth while.

“Assess your professional development, beliefs, willingness, skills and strategies for engagement in organizational conflict and change.”

As I discussed on page two, each person needs to feel valued when it comes to organizational change. The person also needs to be willing and open to change. Over the past ten weeks I have begun to recognize that change really does begin with any person in an organization. Within our society, it often seems that only the people in a position of power can affect change. Working at Womencare, I noticed the hierarchical system is different. Although there are supervisors and people may have more authority than others, each person is valued equally.

Consensus is a huge part of Womencare's organizational style. In working within an organization that uses this I have learned that my attitude toward change is one of the biggest roles I can have in change. If I am willing to listen to other's ideas openly and express mine then people will be moved to do the same. Have there been times when I have witnessed conflict with this organization, yes; but the unique way in which it was dealt was influential on my professional development. Often during team meetings people will have differing ideas on how situations should be handled but because each party has a willing attitude to actively listen to each other and recognize that the outcome will affect both of them, the conflict is handled from a more positive standpoint. Each party is heard and feels valued even if the outcome is not exactly what they wanted. This idea of equal participation and positive conflict is one of the greatest skills I can walk away with after ten weeks.

## Final Thoughts

Over this past quarter something that really struck me was the idea of institutionalized discrimination. Listening to the panels really opened my eyes to how society is still struggling as a whole when it comes to this topic. This quarter I had a really profound experience when I went to DSHS with a resident at the shelter. English is not her first language so I came to be a support while she met with a social worker. From the moment we entered the DSHS office I felt uncomfortable. The set up of the waiting area makes you feel as if everyone is staring at you. Then as we did the digital check-in, I noticed that the options were only offered in English and Spanish – which the woman's first language was Russian so these were not helpful to her. It also gave you only 30 seconds to make a decision. I could hardly sift through the options and English is my first language. The paper work we had to fill out was only in English and then when actually meeting with the social worker we had to use a telephone translation service.

I am kind of your typical white female and this experience really made me look at how the system still does not accommodate diversity. I question how much change society has really made over the past 200 years. The upper crust still determines much of how the political system works, English is still the prevailing language, and discrimination is still present. I agree that there has been change but there is still more to be done. It seems silly to say that the simple things are important now more than ever but it is true. Capitalism reigns supreme still, so shopping my convictions is significant. Addressing discrimination on a person to person basis can cause change if everyone does it. I feel this is a time for people to do the simple things, and to change our attitudes toward this idea that institutional discrimination does not exist. It is time to seek it out and be willing to stand up against it.

## References

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- Fuller, R. (2004). *Somebodies and nobodies: overcoming the abuse of rank*. Gabriola Island, BC, Canada: New Society Publish
- Sargent, L. (2009). *Contemporary political ideologies: a comparative analysis*. Belmont, CA: Wadworth.