
Class Differences in Our Community

Class differences are important distinctions within society. Economic factors, specifically, are especially influential in undermining class politics. It is important to be able to understand who becomes wealthy in a business-driven world and who ends up at the bottom of the chain as an employee to those specific business owners. One may ask why does that matter? People often base their political decision making off of their personal lives and what they are lacking. For example, a janitor that works for a coal factory might want better employee rights and better pay. Whereas the factory owner might not be interested in his employee's welfare and happiness but rather in maximizing production while minimizing costs. Therefore, when it comes to choosing a political party, each individual will choose to support a party or organization based on what they want and need in their daily lives. The factory owner may want lower taxes. However, the janitor may want higher corporate taxes because in the end, the money from taxes will be distributed to society as a form of welfare or other types of aid.

It is important to note that in a capitalistic world, life revolves around money. When there is a big gap between poor and wealthy individuals, talks about unfairness and economic inequality may rise. People are unable to purchase the same products and therefore, lives differ dramatically (Thrasher). Furthermore, in a two-party system, like in the U.S., we would have one dimension because those parties only collide on a single spectrum, the left and right spectrum. In Europe, however, politics has become so complex, and so many political parties exist, that we need more than one dimension. Some of the more important ones are authoritarian vs individualistic which considers the extent to which the party believes in the idea of authority in society vs individual autonomy. The second dimension to consider is state control vs free market which expresses different approaches in the economy. It is often believed that "social characteristics such as class, religion, regional and ethnic studies" are important contributions when it comes to voting in Western Europe (Pasotti, L.3.6). Tying this back to class politics, individuals from different backgrounds and classes may agree upon certain topics and disagree upon others. Having multiple dimensions would allow individuals to be placed in their fitting area. However, over time, cleavages have made it less helpful in capturing political landscapes (Pasotti L.3.7).

Another dimension to consider is post-materialism vs materialism. Post-materialism bases their first argument on "the scarcity hypothesis [which] states that the period in which the survey is taken matters. In other words, it links economic wellbeing & political preferences. In tough economic periods, people tend to give more materialist answers than compared to prosperous times (Pasotti L.3.7). For example, they may have support for a stronger defense system or the desire to decrease taxes (Bale, 160). This would defeat the purpose of class differences because the information gained is not necessarily true. It is primarily based on what the social and political environment is like at that specific time. For example, if an individual was asked whether it is important to teach children about money early on, most individuals would respond positively during times of recession than not. Furthermore, the "waning of social cleavages is typically attributed to fundamental changes at the societal level, which have become manifest in changes of the situation, attitudes, and behavior of individuals" (Elff, 277). Thus, these changes "have blurred the boundaries between social groups, such as social classes, and have undermined the relevance of these divisions, or have directly affected the way in which individuals make voting decisions" (Elff, 277). Over time, class inequality has lost its political

importance due to changes in attitudes and behaviors of individuals.

In conclusion, there is controversy in individuals' party choices and class positioning. Seymour Lipset first saw elections as "an expression of the democratic class struggle," [he] argued that class was now declining as a political force" (Adams, 476). Furthermore, he and many others believe that the link between political opinions and class is blurring and therefore, class voting is declining as a whole.

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