RUNNING HEAD: SOCIOLOGY

Social Problems

[Name of the Student:]

[Name of the Institution:]

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# Introduction

Social problems arise when a society is confronted with factors that upset the way society has been organized. Sociologists approach the social problems differently and present their explanations according to their perspectives. The major perspectives to study social problems are structural, functional, conflict, and symbolic-interactionist perspectives. Furthermore, each of these perspectives involve different approaches of looking into a particular issue. The research methods applied to explore social issues include surveys, experiments, focus groups, field research, secondary data analysis, and comparative research. This essay relates to the issue of racial discrimination of African Americans. It presents a review of an article, "A Plan to Diversify New York’s Segregated Schools” published in The New York Times on September 2, 2019; by applying the sociological approaches to the problem under discussion.

The discrimination of African Americans based on racial attributes has been a social issue since the early settlement of the American inhabitants. However, through continuous efforts made by theorists and reformers, some positive changes have been observed as well. The school system of New York is the largest in the country, and the racial segregation prevalent in these schools is not a social issue to be overlooked at all. It affects a huge population by hurting their feelings, suppressing their ambitions, and causing an overall loss of productivity of the country.

# Substantiating Sociological Theory

Given the theories in Sociology, the ‘conflict theory' most suitably deals with the issue. This perspective enables sociologists to view the social problems as a natural outcome of the inequalities in society. Inequalities cause some groups of people in a society to bear disadvantages based on economic class, gender, race, religion, and other factors. The conflict theory posits that a society is organized when people make use of technology and resources for fulfilling the needs of life and improve their living conditions (Henslin and Nelson, 2000). Society is faced with social problems when there are unequal opportunities for becoming successful.

The ‘ethnic-conflict perspective' of the conflict theory explains the reasons for social inequalities based on ethnic or skin-colour differences (Esman, 2019). Whereas, the ‘economic-conflict perspective’ postulates that social injustice arises from the unequal distribution of major economic resources and political power, which upheavals the social balance (Smelser, 2013). The social issue of school segregation in New York has arisen because the affluent white and Asian students are supported by the policies and criteria set by the authorities managing the system.

# Sociological Research on the Issue

The public schools of New York are segregated based on racism. This segregation affects many social groups, that is, minorities, those who have disabilities related to learning, students who do not live in close proximities, and the foreign students who cannot speak English as their native language. All these groups of candidates face discrimination in the process of admission (Logan and Burdick-Will, 2016). The existing sociological research enables the policymakers to understand the segregation problem and develop strategies and actions that pave the way for a balanced placement of students in the desired schools.

The causes of racial segregation in this school system are primarily the admissions criteria and the screening examinations (Knoester and Au, 2017). The well-off students have enough resource and funds to prepare for these tests. Moreover, their previous education is another advantage for them, which fosters their abilities more than the students of the lower class can do. The sociological knowledge asserts the need for eliminating these tests and allowing all racial groups to equally avail the opportunities (McArdle and Acevedo-Garcia, 2017).

Most of these sought-after schools prevent admission of the students who do not belong to their neighbourhood. The sociological approach views this as a violation of rationalist thinking. It seems to be much similar to the conservative view about women’s physiology that their natural body structure does not support them to be an active participant in the nation’s progress (Ingraham, 1994).

# Schools Segregation Causes Disorganization of Society

The Hispanic and black children, who make up the majority of New York’s students, have to be confined to the average schools. Over the past three decades, they have been executing “gifted and talented programs” in the schools, which have caused many of these children for not being able to get admissions. The Hispanic and black children constitute 65 per cent of all the elementary level students. They can avail only 18 per cent of all the offers. On the high school level, the Hispanic and black students are 66 per cent of the total number of students. However, those who are successful in getting admissions to the high-performing schools are only 16 per cent of all students. These facts suggest that significant changes are necessary to be made to improve the system (Murphy, 2019).

The proposals given by the commission appointed by Mayor Bill de Blasio were protested by the white and Asian parents, who belong to the well-off social class (Eisenberg, 2018). This reaction shows enough inequality and discrimination based on racism. A society cannot thrive while nurturing such harmful factors inside it. The high-performing schools should demonstrate a good sense of responsibility towards the social welfare by utilizing the commission’s proposals (Spaiser et al., 2018).

# Conclusion

The need for understanding the aforesaid issue given the conflict perspective of sociological research is evident. The Marxist theory advocates equal opportunities for the economic success of all people. It identifies the disappointing consequences of social inequity, which can lead to victims of discrimination. The black and Hispanic students should have equal chances of being educated in the top schools of the state. The frustration caused by racial prejudice may result in rebellious attitudes, engagement in crimes, and dissatisfaction in careers. The conflict theory analyzes the problem thoroughly and suggests patterns of change and reforms that can be implemented for eliminating the factors disrupting social progress.

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