

Kyla Given

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Contemporary American Society

Critical Thinking Paper #1

“Exactly why does the division of labor encourage social inequality?”

Division of labor is one of the most significant causes of social inequality. It can be simply as dividing tasks of individuals within a corporation or establishment. According to Charon, social structure is inevitable and with this structure comes division or inequality. If social structure did not exist, people would still be divided by facial features, intellect and other individual qualities that make humans unique from one another. We have seen division of labor for centuries but the eighteenth and nineteenth century was when we seen the start of a new emergence because of industrialization and urbanization. The author categorized division of labor into four subjects, economics, iron law of oligarchy, international creation of social structure, and social stratification. Each of these topics make up the major components of the division of labor. Social Inequality is something that has been around as long as organization amongst people existed, some may argue that should not be this way, but there is no evidence to show how society would work without it.

The economic portion of the division of labor may be the one that is looked at the most because the world revolves around wealth and currency. As stated by Charon, “The owner of business will always exploit the workers, gain at their own expense, and become increasingly

wealthy and powerful because of them.” (Charon pg. 70) In a capitalistic society it is very easy for a business owners to gain control over its workers and maintain their power. Since they have this wealth and can easily get employees, it makes the workers continue in a cycle to remain in their position as employees. These business owners have a set of skills and capital that allow them to become owners of organizations. They minimize opportunities for workers to gain or reach their position which keeps this cycle of inequality going. Men have always been the majority when it comes to the wealth and successful businesses. Women still till this day are often paid less than men and given less opportunities regardless of their skillset. Once economic division of labor begins, it is very difficult to terminate and inequality will be established.

Iron law of oligarchy states that organization of society will always create inequality when leaders are selected. Not only do we see division of labor in business, we see it in social groups, schools, government and even armed forces. Charon says, “We might notice that division of labor will exist in such places because a division will arise between *those who lead and those who follow.*” (Charon pg. 70) Large organizations or establishments will chose leaders that can run the mandatory operations and successfully maintain order of others. For example, in the army there are ranks that separate leaders from the rest of the group. These leaders are generals, lieutenants, commanders etc. They are given these role because they have proven or shown that they can lead a large number of people. Robert Michels says that leadership is only accumulated by a small amount of people also known as the elite. Once these people gain power over the rest they have a major advantage and do what is necessary to keep their positions. The others who are not in power stay that way because it is very hard to challenge those leaders. Iron law of oligarchy creates social inequality because it creates an uneven amount of power distributed to a select few individuals.

Intentional creation of social structure is another major reason that inequality exists. Many organizations follow traditional standards that include positions that lead to privilege, power, rights and prestige. Charon states “Modern society undermines tradition and develops what Max Weber describes as legal-rational positions. Rights, responsibilities, power, privilege, and prestige are spelled out by written rules or laws, and individuals are chosen and advanced according to qualifications.” (Charon pg. 72) Traditional and rational organization purposely creates inequality by individuals who wish to have authority over others. Positions for a job have qualifications and requirements that determine what power a person has in a company or corporation.

Social stratification can be defined as social arrangements in society that are for the most part permanent. There are three class systems that separate people from one another one is economic, the other social and the last political. The economic class systems separates individuals based off of their wealth, it can be simply named low, middle, and high class. Perrucci and Wysong classify them as, super, credential, professionals, comfort, wage earners, self employed, and excluded class. This class system is a ranking that determines what power you have in society and some may find it very important. Social class separates individuals based off of who they are as a person this includes, race, education, age, sexual preference, etc. Your social class can sometimes affect your economic class that is why it is so significant. Political class separates individuals based off of politics which can include, immigrants, citizens, president, senators etc.

The division of labor is one of the main causes of social inequality. Economic, iron oligarchy, intentional creations of organizations, and stratification all are major components of division of labor. Inequality can be considered to some a problem but for others it may be

considered necessary. The unequal distribution of power is what lead the United States to where it is currently. A handful of individuals are willing to fight for a change of inequality but the majority are not and that is why it will continue for year to come.

### **References**

Charon, J. M. (n.d.). *Ten Questions: A Sociological Perspective* (8th ed.).  
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