

## The Idealization of Power and Class In America

Our society has always had a hierarchy of power and class. From English royalty to modern-day presidency, there have always been levels of wealth and efficiency. The American Dream is the land of opportunity and where anyone can succeed. But beneath the surface of the American ideal lies a complex web of power and class that shapes opportunities and life outcomes. The concepts from both Domhoff and Mantonis dwell on the impact of power dynamics and class divisions in our modern world. By dissecting these intertwined forces of power and class, people can examine how the concepts influence economic policies, access to resources, and healthcare quality.

G. William Domhoff's theory of the power elite argues that the United States is not a true democracy but a society ruled by a small, interconnected group of influential individuals at the top of the economic, political, and social spheres. Corporate leaders such as CEOs, board directors, and other influential individuals can operate with barely any regulations or boundaries. As they have many shared ideologies and social cohesion, it makes it harder to allow the working class or middle class to have the same amount of sway and power, leading to inequality in economic policies. Domhoff uses vital elements, such as economic inequality, limited access to political resources, and ideological control through social media and other enterprises, to show how combining different resources can lead to limited power in the lower and middle classes. Because of those factors, the working class tries to climb the "economic ladder" of success, but there is a universal black-and-white split. In power dynamics, a "black and white split" can represent a situation where power is concentrated in the hands of two opposing groups, with little

hierarchy with limited social mobility, leading to an even more rift in social class divisions.

Social class stems from the difference in wealth, occupation, social status, and cultural capital. As society has become more stagnant in its structure, social mobility has gotten lower, which is the ability to jump from different social classes. There has become a higher rate of inequality, not just in race and culture, but in ways of opportunity in institutions. As the collective consciousness has helped create the idea of social class, it has made us wonder if that has also left us with unequal opportunities for all people. The upper class has nannies for their children and money to spend on leisurely things. The middle or working class can take vacations once or twice a year but work paycheck to paycheck. The lower class has low wages, limited benefits, and a lack of job security often characterize lower-class jobs. The ability to get good healthcare and other necessities is much more complicated than for the upper class or elites. Gregory Mantsios argues that the American Dream, which emphasizes opportunity and upward mobility, is a myth. He believes social class plays a much more significant role in shaping life outcomes than individual merit. He believes American Society is divided into a more nuanced version of social class levels. The capitalist class (business owners and high-income professionals), the working class, the working poor, and the underclass (unemployed or reliant on social programs). Media tends shows often portray a specific view of life, like rich people being successful and happy. This might not reflect reality for most people, especially those struggling financially. Mantsios argues that these portrayals can make people believe things are more accessible than they are or that poverty is their fault. He also says these stories don't show the experiences of poor people, which can make them feel invisible and unheard.

out in the real world. People with higher incomes and good health insurance can access better quality healthcare specialists, hospitals, and treatments. This can significantly impact their health outcomes. Those with lower incomes or lacking health insurance may face limited options, longer wait times, and potentially lower-quality care. This continues with people of lower class status trying to find jobs as well, especially in Medicare. Medical bills are a significant source of financial hardship in the US. Even with insurance, high deductibles and copays can create a burden. As a more specific example, a wealthy individual with cancer can seek out a renowned specialist at a top hospital, while someone without good insurance might have limited options and longer wait times for treatment.

The American Dream promises equal opportunity for all, yet the grip of power and class stratification paints a different reality. We've explored how power, concentrated in the hands of a privileged few, shapes access to resources, healthcare, and even the quality of education. We've seen how social class, often rigid and determined by factors beyond individual control, dictates life trajectories. It stems from the idea that America is not a place of equal opportunity, and where you stand socially is one of the only ways to excel in our country.