

Student's Name

Instructor

Course Title

Date

Explain the consequences of social isolation and concentration effect according to William Julius

Wilson

Poverty is a problem which has been affecting many people in the urban setting. The population layers affected the most are the minorities. This study seeks to analyze poverty among the African Americans in urban town according to William Julius Wilson *When Work Disappears*. For a long time, poverty has been blamed on segregation especially when involving the blacks and the whites (Wilson, 1503). For example, African Americans have been complaining about segregation and discrimination as the main reason behind high poverty rates. However, according to Wilson, the main reason behind poverty among African Americans in the urban centers is the social isolation and the concentration effect (Wilson, 1504). Meaning, if people are not exposed to social isolation and the concentration effect, there would be fewer crimes and more people working on the streets.

The social isolation for a long time has been affecting people in a plethora of ways, especially when it comes to the minorities. People offering job opportunities rarely interact with the poor, thus making it much harder for them to land a job. (Wilson, 1503). This creates a certain pattern in which employed people only attract likewise employed citizens, whilst unemployed attract the same sort of people. This kind of isolation makes it harder for people to find a contact outside their circle of interaction. For instance if someone has lost their job, it would be fairly easy for them to find another one, all they need is to get in touch with their

contacts. In a similar fashion, concentration effect has been affecting negatively the employment situation for the African-Americans. This effect is felt when people of the same employment situation (unemployed) keep to their likewise unemployed friends and acquaintances (Wilson, 1504). This exact effect prevents unemployed people from getting a decent if any at all job.

One of the reasons behind high crime rates in urban centers is unemployment. Without a job, an individual will do whatever it takes to feed the family, pay the rent and crime does not seem to be an option they frown upon. Substance abuse can also be a contributing factor to poverty. It is obviously an illicit act and can cost one their position. (Wilson, 1505). The African American minors are exposed to substance abuse at a young age due to lack of education which leads to them losing interest in studies and dropping out of school altogether. Lack of education severely limits people's chances of landing a good job, or landing one at all. (Wilson, 1506). Today, job opportunities required education because the white collar jobs are changing to service-based and that requires a degree in a certain field.

When people get equal opportunities in the society they can use their full potential and be responsible for finding and keeping a job. Isolation has been among the leading factor contributing to crimes and misbehavior among the youth, reducing economic prosperity and causing poor living standards in the ghettos (Wilson, 1507). After achieving success, many people prefer to leave their background or difficult childhood behind. This may serve as proof that poverty is the result of isolation and concentration effect and not by racial discrimination (Wilson, 1507). Successful African Americans can reside in the very same wealthy neighborhood along with their Caucasian counterparts and get the same high-paid jobs.

The Difference between Structure and Culture

There is a difference between the culture and the structure. The culture addresses problems brought by the factors within a particular society and the structure focuses on external factors such as the economy of a given country (Wilson, 1507). Therefore, in this case, unemployment is not caused by the culture of African Americans but the structure of the external condition, for example, according to Wilson, there was a point where the government policies moved the industries abroad or in the center of the town making the job opportunities related to industrialization unavailable for the poor in the ghetto. The culture, in this case, includes the lifestyle of people, norms, traditions, and beliefs that guide people in a given society (Wilson, 1507). The external conditions such as the economy, living standards, and other socio-economic factors are the contributing factors towards poverty among African Americans in inner urban areas.

The moving of the job to other areas made employment physically unavailable for African Americans in the inner urban area. For the industries that did not move far, they lacked the resources to get to the new job location (Wilson, 1508). The residential areas that are near the job premises are limited by high cost. Many African Americans in the inner urban areas survive through sharing a resource such as houses, meals among others thus making movement limited. Lack of resources to go to the locations with job opportunities renders people unemployed. Another problem is lack of quality education. In many cases, the schools in inner urban areas are congested and make it difficult for tutors to deliver quality education to help the student to tackle challenging situation such as economic changes. The economy continues to change where occupations that are service based are preferred and require skilled labor which African Americans in the inner urban areas lack (Wilson, 1508). According to Wilson, good jobs

disappeared is what making it difficult for African Americans to find a legitimate source of income job, racial bias among the Caucasians.

#### How unemployment tied together structural and cultural problem

There is a difference between the structural and the cultural problem in the society as discussed above. However, one of the main problem facing people due to unemployment ties both the structural and cultural problems. For example, unemployment makes people share resource because of scarcity (Luke, 161). Thus, if the job moves away, then they cannot move from there area of residence due to lack of resources. From the above discussion, it is evident that structural changes in the economy can result in cultural problems (Luke, 170). Unemployment is linked to a high rate of substance abuse among the African Americans which leads to cultural problems such as societal degradation and poor quality education.

Unemployment also brings about lack of funds to rent a good house. Therefore, the African American is forced to live in the ghetto which they can afford. Structural problems, in this case, result in cultural problems of poor living standards among African Americans (Luke, 177). As mentioned earlier one of the reasons for unemployment is when jobs are destroyed by technological advancement. Poor education quality has been contributing to the problem of unskilled labor for African American living in the inner urban areas. The living standards do not give a student a suitable environment for their studies. Lack of quality education makes it difficult for the youth to acquire skills to deal with advanced technology (Luke, 181). For example, today many jobs which people used to do are replaced through mechanization and computerization of many procedures requiring skilled labor. Thus, the structural problem and the cultural problems are tied together by the problem of unemployment in the society.

Michel Foucault Discipline and Surveillance

According to Foucault the world has changed and people are no longer punished as they were in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, therefore, the form of punishment adopted in the current generation involves modern discipline and surveillance. In the past people used to be punished for their mistakes through physical punishment and violence (Foucault, 204). The punishment was done in the public where people would be assembled to watch an individual being hanged for a crime. People today are being punished through surveillance. Surveillance gives the authorities the ability to see everything an individual does, making it hard to commit a crime or doing something unacceptable. The punishment has changed from physical to psychological. Thus, in the modern discipline, the punisher focuses on changes of the mind and of the criminals. The power that was used in the past according to Foucault was referred to as sovereign power where those in power decided on various punishments imposed on an individual (Foucault, 210). Today, modern discipline means that people are punished through disciplinary power. Modern surveillance is where people are always watched and thus, they fear being seen committing a crime.

#### The Application of Discipline and Surveillance in Rutgers Newark Campus

Many higher learning institutions understand that punishing students and the staff members might be a problem in the current generation. Junior students in the present day can be punished by being denied internet access among other privileges. However, college students are grown-ups and controlling their behaviors remains a big problem due to their age and aggressiveness (Foucault, 221). Rutgers Newark Campus has established disciplinary and surveillance measures which aim at reducing inappropriate behavior in the campus. For example to ensure discipline, the institution has a set of rules and respective punishments for various

actions meant to control the behavior of the students. On the other hand, the staff has professional ethics code that they must follow.

Modern surveillance is also applied in the institution to control the behavior of all the students and professionals in the facility (Foucault, 227). For example, the campus authorities have installed surveillance cameras across the campus to monitor the behavior of students and the staff members. The campus has focused the cameras on the areas that are risky or have a history of crime, thus minimizing the rate. The second way of surveillance is using evaluation forms for the staff giving a chance for people to speak their mind about the behavior and the productivity of a particular student or staff member. The student can be monitored by reviewing their history every time they are in trouble (Foucault). Surveillance helps to minimize crime and misbehavior, because people prefer keeping their secrets to themselves.

## Works Cited

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