

# Sociology

---

Student's Name  
Institutional Affiliation



---

**GREAT**ESSAYS  
— .com —

---

# Abstract

---

The article under review shows how the economy as a social institution affects different people in America. The economic instabilities, limited job opportunities, high cost of living and housing are pushing people into states with even much limited opportunities. Social stratification plays out within this social institution as some are able to afford the cost of living while the rest cannot. The structural strain and conflict theory are used to explain how economic instability can contribute to social disequilibrium.

**Keywords:** Stratification, social institution, theory.

# Sociology

---

This paper is a response to the article “Americans are on the move, but in the wrong direction”. The article underscores the economic crisis that most Americans are grappling with as housing become unaffordable and the economy shuts up the dream of many hoping to get jobs and earn a livelihood. This situation has plunged many into poverty, un-affordability, struggles and unemployment. In Los Angeles housing is expensive and the cost of living is generally higher and un-sustainable for many. Consequently, there is a tremendous rise in immigration from Los Angeles to San Bernardino, Calif. This paper identifies the social institution in the article, applies a sociological theory to explain the events in the article and explores how social stratification plays out in the article.

The author of the article reports how Americans are moving in masses from Los Angeles to San Bernardino in a bid to secure affordable housing. However, the economic opportunities in this part of America are few and deplorable. Thus, although life is cheap, employment and other economic opportunities are significantly fewer than in Los Angeles. This is what drives the author of the article to make a conclusion that although most Americans are on the move from Los Angeles to San Bernardino; this move is towards the wrong direction since it makes them even more vulnerable to the economic woes they are assumably fleeing from in Los Angeles (NPR, 2014). A social institution can sociologically be conceptualized as any institution in the society that influences and shapes human interactions through its structures that grip individual member in the institution and the society in the ultimate (Dalton, 2008). The social institution that is evident in the story of Americans moving from Los Angeles to San Bernardino for what is referred to as unsustainable housing and cost of living is the economy or the labor market.

Social stratification can be defined as the systematic, deliberate or un-deliberate inequalities between different people sharing in the same interactive radius (Dalton, 2008). These inequalities are produced by the social structures inherent in the human interactions within a particular context. In this article social stratification is evident by the mere fact that there are people who are able to afford the high cost of living and housing in Los Angeles while there is another section of Americans to who the cost of living has simply become unbearable. In essence it is this stratification that classifies the American population into the different categories that are evident. Those living Los Angeles are relatively economically endowed than those in San Bernardino. This is why they make the choices regarding where they would like to live (NPR, 2014).

The consequence a socially stratified society like in America, the stratification structure work to favor the upper class who can afford the high cost of living and housing. This category of American will continue to build their economic base at the expense of their counterparts in San Bernardino since, as the author of the article reports “there are more economic opportunities in Los Angeles than in San Bernardino”. As Americans in the low class move away from Los Angeles to cushion themselves against the high cost of living, they step miles away from opportunities that the upper class remain to enjoy in Los Angeles. In San Bernardino, the author of the article use the example of Los Angeles and San Bernardino to illustrate how social stratification is playing a role in keep the lower class Americans from the best jobs, tenders, business opportunities and other economic benefits. Thus stratification has blocked residents of San Bernardino from best opportunities like those in Los Angeles (NPR, 2014).

Structural strain theory that was advanced by Merton can explain the events experience that Americans are going through. According to this theory, strain occurs when people experience a mismatch between the goals they have and the means for achieving those goals (Vito & Maahs,

2012). For example, in the article the low classes are experiencing strain in terms of affordability of housing in Los Angeles. Merton argues in his theory that when people encounter such strains, they may respond through conformity, innovation, retreatism or rebellion. In the article, Americans who are unable afford the high cost of living resort to living in San Bernardino (NPR, 2014). This is a form of innovation. However, this does not seem to the economic crisis facing Americans since moving to San Bernardino only drives them far away from economic opportunities that are available in Los Angeles. Jamika, for example, migrates from Los Angel to San Bernardino because of the economic strain in this county and the perceived cheaper housing in the other county. This is a copy strategy for Jamika (NPR, 2014).

Marxist conflict theory can also explain the challenges bedeviling the Americans. The theory explains the inequality between different people in society (Brym & Lie, 2010). There seems to be unequal opportunities for the rich and lower class. The of the article under review reports that even though those who are unable to afford housing in Los Angeles resort to living in San Bernardino, there are limited economic opportunities here as compared to Los Angeles. This implies those who are economically endowed and are able to afford the cost of living in Los Angeles have more opportunities compared to their counterparts in San Bernardino. The jobs that are available in San Bernardino are low wages jobs. The foreclosures of different industries and factories in this county may have because of the deplorable conditions under which they operated. The exploitation of the low class through low wages, poor housing and security situation in San Bernardino is a potential for conflict between the different economic class members. The low class may feel alienated and thus arise to confront their crisis by blaming it on the upper class. Thus the economic crisis that is facing Americans is a potential for conflict between the members of the different economic strata.

The economic crisis that is bedeviling Americans is apparently affecting

different people differently. For example the poor who cannot afford the cost of living using their meager income opt to move from Los Angeles and live in San Bernardino. There are ironically more economic opportunities, business opportunities and better paying jobs in Los Angeles than in San Bernardino. This implies that even though the cost of housing and living is relatively high in Los Angeles, the economically stable individuals who are able to sustain and cope with the high cost of living are exposed to better business and employment opportunities. This is not so with the poor who are unable to afford the life in Los Angeles (NPR, 2014). The options are limited for people who look for jobs while living in San Bernardino unlike those in Los Angeles. Indeed it is a state where there are even job cuts by the county government. Those who are already employed but looking for cheaper housing are not any better. The cost of housing may be affordable but there are very limited opportunities for them in this county.

In conclusion, economy is a critical social institution in society that must be stable for the state of equilibrium and social stability to be achieved. In the article the instability of this social institution is worsening the life of many Americans who become vulnerable to crime, unemployment and unaffordable cost of living. Unfortunately, this social institution worsens the life of the lower class category of the population when they are compared to the upper class.

# References

---

Brym, R. J., & Lie, J. (2010). *Sociology: Your compass for a new world, the brief edition*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Dalton, C. (2008). *You May Ask Yourself: An Introduction to Thinking like a Sociologist*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Staff, NPR (2014). *Americans are on the move, but in the wrong direction*.

Vito, G. F., & Maahs, J. R. (2012). *Criminology: Theory, research, and policy*. Sudbury, Mass: Jones & Bartlett Learning.