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## The Consequences of the Religious Stratification of Multi-Religious Countries on the USA Example

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**Abstract:** Nowadays the problem of the society stratification is actual for any country. Multi-cultural states face the problem of religious stratification but it has not been studied and researched enough to find the proper solution to keep the society and population being united. Due to migration and immigration process and the globalization of the economy the process of religious stratification will concern any country and even those that have religious homogenous society. The consequences of this process and the solution to cope with this problem are proposed in this article. We took an example of the USA as it is multi-religious, cultural and race country, in which the stratification on any feature can be vividly seen in its harmful results. The analysis and studying of the achievement of status and life path traditions of the population in multi-national countries give a full picture of the religious stratification and its consequences for the society and show religion influences upon inequality.

**Keywords:** stratification, society, religion, inequality, USA

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### INTRODUCTION

When we think about social inequality, it's tempting to view it as the inevitable byproduct of effort, where those at the top are rewarded for their perseverance, and those at the bottom should work harder.

Social stratification or social class refers to visible societal layers or classes of differing wealth, income, race, education or power (Korgen, 2017). Social stratification, social class and social inequality (hereafter social class and inequality) are often used interchangeably, all of which are the products of an unequally structured society in which identities are socially produced on a large scale (Keister & Southgate, 2012).

Social stratification means the differentiation of a given population into hierarchically superposed classes. It is manifested in the existence of upper and lower social layers. Its basis and very essence consist in an unequal distribution of rights and privileges, duties and responsibilities, social values and privations, social power and influences among the members of a society. Close to the concept of social stratification – inequality. Social inequality is the main problem of modern societies, which has an extremely negative impact on social cohesion, which, in turn creates barriers to social and economic development of society and country.

Examining social stratification requires a macrosociological perspective in order to view societal systems that make inequalities visible. Although individuals may support or fight inequalities, social stratification is created and supported by society as a whole through values and norms and consistently durable systems of stratification. Since there are very many bases on which human inequalities may be understood and upon which exploitation and oppression may be produced and reproduced, it is important to recognize that these variables are not mutually exclusive; for example, in the preindustrial world religious and military strata often coexisted along with those based on gender and ethnicity.

Societies are made up of people who are all different. Sociologists use the term “social inequality” to define the unequal distribution of valuable resources, rewards and positions in society. The concept of social inequality refers only to differences in such parameters that affect the social position of the individual. Hoffmann uses the definition of social inequality given by Hradil in his book “Socioeconomic Differences in Old Age Mortality”: “Social inequality exists when people frequently receive more of a society’s ‘valuable goods’ than others owing to their position in the social network of relationships” (Hoffmann, 2008).

Since the earliest-known works on the nature of human societies, it was recognized that social stratification was a central part of human organization. Social stratification is a ranking of people or groups of people in a society (Vagni, 2020). The term was described by the earliest sociologists as something more than the almost universal inequality that existed in all complex societies. Social stratification is a system with predictable rules behind the ranking of individuals and groups that are designed to uncover and understand theories of social stratification. A

system of social stratification also has some form of legitimation of the ranking of people and the unequal distribution of valuable goods, services, and prestige.

The issue of social inequality and its result social stratification is still relevant nowadays despite numerous and large-scale studies carried out in this sphere (Miethlich & Šlahor, 2018). It is largely connected with the integration processes taking place in the world community. The society constantly changes being influenced by different economic, political, social, scientific and technological processes and these changes introduce certain adjustments to the structure of society, putting forward certain class-forming criteria.

The object of the study is the process of social stratification in a country with a high-level predisposition to social inequality as a result of economical, religious, or other conditions. The subject of the research is the religious stratification of society with numerous denominations within the population. The aim of the current article is to find out the influence of the religious stratification of society upon the population in the multi-national countries.

Nowadays studying the problem of religious stratification contributes to the collection of information regarding the specifics of changes in the composition of social classes, layers and groups and the processes of the interaction between them. It helps to identify new social entities, as well as predicting the further development of society and prevention of negative consequences arising in the course of social transformations.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to scientists, there are two main approaches to the theory of stratification - structural (structuralism) and functional (evolutionist and conflictological).

Social scientists have studied social class and inequality at length. In the 19th century, Marxian theories of stratification (Avineri, 1968) considered social inequality as crucial to understand human society - the struggle between the exploited and exploiting classes. The structural approach developed mainly in Western Europe. Its authors analyze various structures to detect the functions they perform. This direction is represented by such scientists as E. Durkheim, B. Malinovsky, and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, etc (Durkheim, 2013; Malinovsky, 1990; Boskoff, 1958).

The functional approach proposes a certain set of functional requirements and then identifies various structures performing these functions. The founder of the structural-functional school is T. Parsons (Parsons, 1935). The famous representatives of structural-functional approach are R. Merton and Yu. A. Levada in Russia (Merton, 1968; Shalin, 2008). The idea of rewarding the best people is close to the theory of functionalism. It is characterized by building a social hierarchy in accordance with the hierarchy of values that appear in accordance with the evaluation of human activities arising in material, religious, philosophical, political and other values in a given society.

The first detailed American study of social stratification appeared in "Middletown" by Robert and Helen Lynd in 1929 (Lynd & Lynd, 1959). Max Weber proposed a three-pronged theory of stratification with class, status, and power as distinct ideal types, and social class manifested as unequal access to economic resources in the early 20th century (Giddens, 2013). Globalization has influenced American sociologists and new research methods have helped create a new line of research. In the second half of the 20th century, Lenski developed the theory of social stratification, further arguing that the accumulation of information, especially technological information, is the most basic and powerful factor in the evolution of human societies (Lenski, 1984). Technological advances laid the foundations of social inequality in terms of the distribution of power and wealth.

There are a large number of criteria for social stratification, but their diversity is reducible to four key parameters: income, power, level of education and prestige of the profession. On their basis three social classes can be distinguished: upper, middle and lower classes.

Analyzing the views of the founders of the classics (O. Comte, G. Spencer), modern (M. Weber, P. Sorokin, T. Parsons) and postmodern sociology (P. Bourdieu), it can be admitted the existence of the fundamental and inviolable principle of social inequality and its high functional significance for the organization of communities (Comte, 2009; Spencer, 1979; Weber et al., 2002; XIII International Scientific Conference, 2019; Bourdieu, 1984).

Nowadays only a few scientists try to do the researches on religious stratification of a society and to conclude to what it will lead. In "Trends in Religious Stratification" Pyle (Pyle, 2006) has researched the way religious families are valued in education, professional prestige, and income. Smith and Farith (Smith & Farith 2005) made a similar analysis in their article "Socioeconomic Inequality in the American Religious System" in which they compared specific Protestant denominations. Keister's (Keister, 2001) book, "Getting Rich", makes ranks of religions in terms of the welfare of their members. Such ratings are usually used in introductory textbooks on the sociology and sociology of religion. Keister and Pyle showed the way the religion stratification influences upon the access to resources.

More current researchers include the mentioned above theories and authors as their basis for the studies of the religious and social stratification in the different countries. Using the mentioned theories the authors study the statics data of certain countries or places (Guo et al., 2018; Johnson, 2013; Wright et al., 2013).

## **METHODOLOGY**

In the social sciences most of the modern studies of stratification are based on the achievement of status and life path traditions. Achieving status refers to the process by which people achieve a socioeconomic status throughout their lives, and the approach to achieving status has become one of the most widely used theoretical perspectives in sociological studies of socioeconomic well-being. The prospect of a life journey is another general approach used to understand the relationship between religion and inequality. Life cycle research is an important theoretical approach used to understand the changes in the lives of individuals over time, and it is used effectively to understand how religion influences upon inequality. Religious beliefs are dynamic and can either create or arise as a result of important turning points, and ideas gained through life-long research can capture patterns that arise as a result. For analysis, both the GSS and the Pew Religious Landscape Survey were used. Religious Landscape Survey is a telephone survey of more than 35.0000 respondents all over the USA.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Any society has the hierarchy and as a result inequality. For example, differences in age, gender, height, temperament, eye color, etc. are natural and physiological inequalities that are inherent by all people in any society periods. Such inequalities are immanent and include both positive and negative traits of this phenomenon essence. But besides natural inequality, the individual is also characterized by social inequality, which is associated with a person's place in the system of social differentiation of society or of the "social stratification" of society.

Social stratification as an element of social reality is closely connected with such concepts as social inequality, social status and social structure due to which the role of sociality in society comes to the fore in the political, socio-economic and cultural space.

Most countries of the world can be considered single-religious countries, that is, those in which the bulk of the population belong one religion. Of course, this statement is very arbitrary, but basically multi religious countries are the ones with a large territory such as Russia, the USA, India, etc.

The globalization processes, mobility and migration of the population have made even European religiously conglomerate countries be multi-religious societies. For example, in Germany in 2018, the number of first asylum applicants reached around 162.000. The majority of applicants come from Syria (44.000), Iraq (16.000) and Iran (11.000) (OECD, 2019).

The new trends that can be observed worldwide show the problem of risk accumulation. Nowadays reality is the growth of interethnic tensions. Nationalism and religious intolerance become the ideological basis for the radical groups and processes. The national and religious origins are closely interconnected, in many cases it is even difficult to separate them (Kusbekov et al, 2019). In such difficult conditions of multi religious and economically heterogeneous society it is very important to achieve the stability and harmony on the national and religion levels (Golubovskii et al., 2016).

### **Influence of religion of human's psychology and behavior**

Psychology studies religion in many aspects such as personality, the family, personality development and expectancy, mental and physical health, cognitions and emotions, etc (Emmons et al., 2003).

Religion is a universal aspiration of a person, affecting many different cultural parameters, moral concepts and ideals, as well as influencing human thinking and behavior. People can be motivated by internal or external goals in the general sense, as well as by religion. Motivated people just live with their religion and externally motivated religious people tend to use religion as a tool, for example, to overcome difficulties or getting social resources. External religion is considered self-serving, utilitarian and self-protective.

Religion can also be related with such social dysfunction as the rates of homicide, youth suicide, abortion and early adolescent pregnancy (Park, 2005) and conflict and violence (Ellens, 2004)

Some religions can provoke the strict relations and conflicts in a family: some women may feel less freedom from their Muslim husbands (Jongudomkarn et al., 2006). Some researches having done in South India investigated that the presence of the mental disorders was connected with both religion and poverty (Hackett et al., 1999). However, social stratification into very rich and poor people, on the one hand, leads to an aggravation of social problems, and, on the other hand, creates favorable opportunities in social entrepreneurship for the population with economic problems in the country (Dedusenko, 2017).

The general psychology model shows that mostly people like the others similar to them and dislike those ones who are dissimilar. The long history of ideologically motivated violence suggests can be a powerful justification for a wide range of atrocities.

From the psychology point of view religious conflict can be reflected as a fact that people should believe in the positive nature of the religious or ethnic groups to which they belong, which may mean seeing a negative in an external group (Ariyanto et al., 2007; ).

Religious infusion increased the level of the intergroup conflict with incompatible values: groups with a high level of religious infusion and incompatible values were more biased and discriminated against each other.

Religious infusion that faces value incompatibility and resource-power differential will, possibly, realized into aggression, individual violence, and collective violence (Sheikh et al., 2012; Themnér et al., 2012).

Brand, M. and Van Tongeren, D. (2017) made a great contribution into the search and research of the intergroup religious conflicts and behavior. They came to the conclusion that “the most consistent and largest effect is that people at all levels of religious belief are prejudiced toward those with dissimilar attitudes”.

Due to the constant presence of intergroup conflicts, often fanned by religion (Neuberg et al. 2014), the study of religion and intergroup conflicts is becoming more important than ever especially nowadays when a country’s territory includes several religious groups for living and the high rate of migration is present. It influences upon intergroup conflicts and crimes against humanity, but everyday cases of interpersonal offending.

Religious diversity raises issues of acceptance and adaptation of group differences, as well as questions of how to handle beliefs and practices outside the groups that are not only different but may be considered as wrong ones. The idea of the tolerance is not new in the issue of the management of cultural and religious diversity. Nowadays, tolerance is very popular in national, international and organizational settings for multicultural justice and peaceful coexistence (Verkuyten et al., 2018).

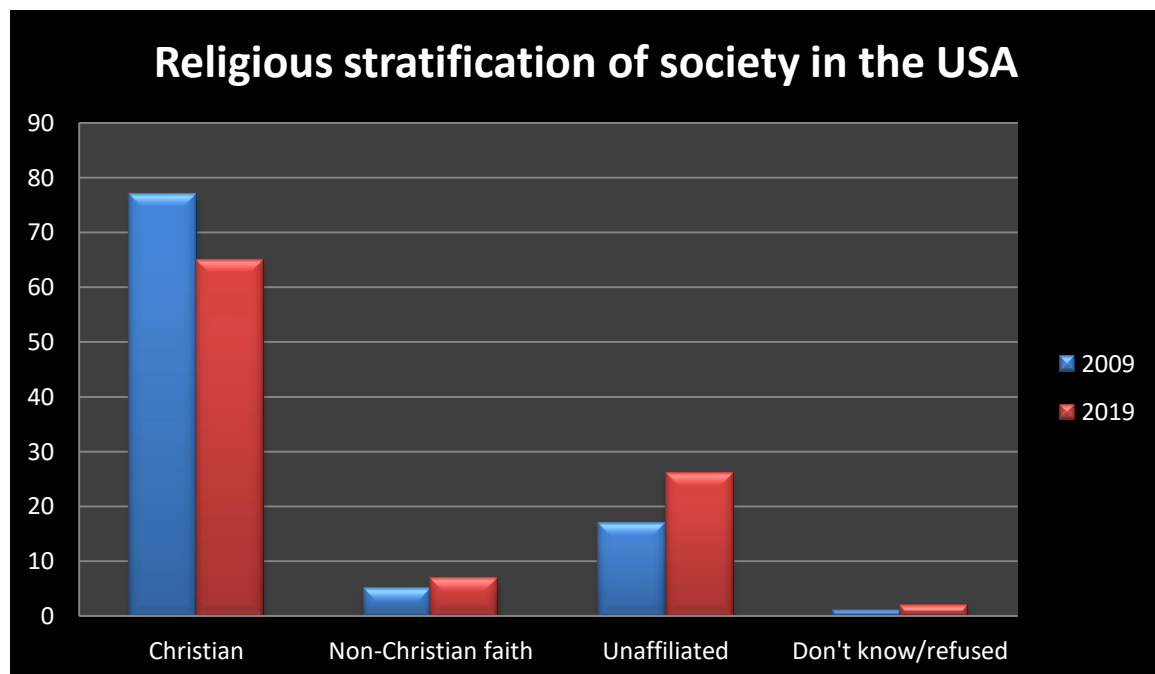
During cross-sectional studies of religious tolerance among Muslims living in Germany it was found that disapproval of beliefs and practices outside the group was combined with tolerance based on respect for others as fellow citizens (Simon et al., 2016; Simon et al., 2017).

Intergroup tolerance is the minimum required condition for living together on one territory or country even taking into account significant differences of the religious groups. It will protect a society from discrimination, hostility, conflict violation.

#### Religious stratification of the USA society

Until very recently sociologists have not paid attention to the religious stratification of the society and the phenomenon of inequality of the religious group classes have not been studied or researched.

According to the results of PEW research center surveys made in 2018/2019 the quantity of Christians has reduced during the recent decade (date is presented in Figure 1 below).



**Fig.1:** Religious stratification of the society in the USA in 2009 and 2019

Source: the annual research made by PEW research center (PEW research center, 2019a).

It looks like the US society is more or less homogeneous but the researchers notice that the quantity of Non-Christian, agnostic and atheist people is slowly growing. Sociologists of religion ignored the class difference of the faith groups. Religious stratification has been an integral part of American life from the very beginning.

Religious stratification originated in colonial America (Wilde et al., 2017). The conditions or reasons of religious stratification in the United States are religious prejudice, competition, and differential power.

The difference in power between groups is measured by membership size, organizational capacity, and resources. As a rule, larger and better organized groups with more resources have more control over their destiny than smaller and poorly organized groups limited in resources. This fact leads to the fact that more organized groups can legalize laws, customs and ideology to their advantage. It can be easily seen in the colonial period of the USA. The resources were under the control of Anglicans, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians and were not available to other religious groups. Congregationalists got a victory over other groups in the New England colonies, and the Anglicans became the dominant group in the mid-Atlantic and southern colonies. In these circumstances, Anglicans and Congregationalists created the law of establishing the churches by themselves in nine colonies out of thirteen (Pyle et al., 2003). However, the size and organizational level of the groups can change after some time. Large groups can become smaller and smaller groups can grow. Highly organized groups can unravel and vice versa (Ertmant, 2017).

One of the indicators of the level of socio-economic development of a group is the possibility of obtaining education and the level of education received (Villarreal, 2020). In accordance with General Social Survey data (data gathering was done in 2016) the stratification of the religious groups in the USA by the education received can be presented as following (Wilde et al., 2018):

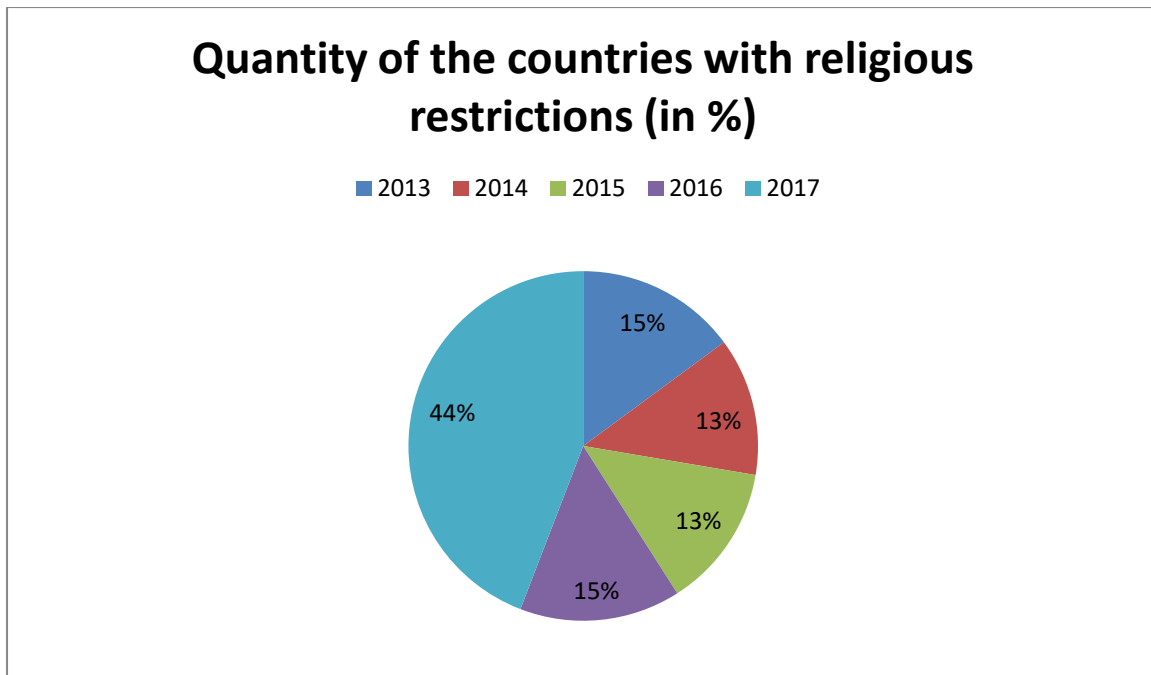
- Jewish - 16.10 (years of schooling) and 68.46 (% of people having got Bachelor degree (BA) or higher degree);
- Mainline Protestants - 14.33 (years of schooling) and 38.52 (% of people having got BA or higher degree);
- Other Religion - 14.33 (years of schooling) and 37.86 (% of people having got BA or higher degree);
- No Religion - 14.00 (years of schooling) and 33.44 (% of people having got BA or higher degree);
- Catholic - 13.48 (years of schooling) and 28.99 (% of people having got BA or higher degree);
- Evangelist Protestant - 13.17 (years of schooling) and 21.32 (% of people having got BA or higher degree);
- Black Protestant - 12.82 (years of schooling) and 14.29 (% of people having got BA or higher degree).

People inherit social status from their parents and, besides it, they also inherit cultural capital on a religious basis (for example, religious knowledge and familiarity with help systems and worship styles). It affects lifelong affiliation patterns. Despite some fluctuations in the socio-economic differences between religious groups in recent decades, it is expected that major religious groups will continue to differ basing on their relative socio-economic status. Jews and Protestants will occupy highest ranks; Catholics, people from the other religious groups and non-religious people will be placed in the middle and Black and Evangelist Protestants will be positioned at the lowest level.

### **Religious restrictions**

The society has more conflicts and violence if it has stratification somehow connected with access to economic benefits and rewards. Intergroup conflict is not just collision in the field in of the intergroup relations but is expression of the need for the development of a group or personality (Kidd, 2019).

The last research made by PEW research center shows that the number of the countries with the religious restriction is growing from year to year. The study was done in 198 countries all over the world (see Figure 2 below).



**Fig.2:** The quantity of the countries with the religious restriction in the world.  
Source: the research made by PEW research (Kishi, 2018; PEW research center, 2019b)

Almost all countries, especially in Europe, have the nationalist parties (“National Front” in France, Danish People’s Party in Denmark, etc).

In the United States, Muslims have been the target of derogatory rhetoric and alleged discrimination. Being Republican presidential candidate Donald J. Trump criticized the parents of a Muslim soldier who was killed in Iraq, claiming that the soldier’s mothers weren’t “allowed” to speak at the Democratic Party Congress, despite the fact that he spoke on stage with her husband, implying that this was the result of her religion (Haberman et al., 2016). Later that year, President-elect Trump seemed to support plans for a temporary ban on Muslim immigration to the United States and the proposed requirement that US Muslims register in the database. He explained it by the recent attack of the ISIS and other Islamist terrorists in Berlin. The founder of IslamInSpanish center, Jaime “Mujahid” Fletcher and the other Muslim leader met with the FBI agents in Huston to find out the consequences of this decision for the Muslims already living in the country. The FBI and Muslim leaders agreed that such solution will put America backwards to the colonial times. (Abby et al., 2016). Besides the Muslims, the Jewish were also pressed by national and religious discrimination. In 2016 during president’s election company, nationalist groups aimed activities against Jews. Neo-Nazis continued to use anti-Semitic language and engage in online harassment of Jewish journalists in the U.S. While much of the online harassment of journalists is carried out by anonymous trolls, there are prominent individuals and websites in the white supremacist world who have played a role in encouraging these attacks. Two of the neo-Nazis, who are responsible for some of the attacks on Jewish journalists, are well known. One of them is Andrew Anglin, who is the founder of “The Daily Stormer” (popular white supremacist website) and the other one is Lee Rogers, the head of Infostormer (formerly The Daily Slave). They both are banned by Twitter through which they have made their attacks but still they have encouraged their followers to anti-Semitic language and memes at Jewish journalists (Anti-Defamation League, 2016).

Religious leaders get critics for not doing enough to stop religious violence. For the public it means that religious communities are involved into every act of extremism if it is not widely discussed. It's not fair. There are millions of believers who are actively involved in helping the poor and marginalized and promoting reconciliation after the war. Religious leaders who are regularly accused of stoking the fire of interfaith violence often try to do the opposite, including mediating peace agreements and promoting non-violence.

Nowadays, at the times of uncertainty the actions of inter-religious groups can be useful anti-poison from religious violence. Religious groups can also bear a reminder of the basic principles of our common humanity. Although this is not an exceptional reserve of religious groups, the conscious dissemination of the values of empathy, compassion, forgiveness and altruism is more necessary than ever. Persistent calls for patience, tolerance, understanding, personal dialogue and reconciliation are more important than ever, given today's growing polarization and dangerous anonymity provided by social networks. Tolerance is a necessary component of a functioning democracy and a stable world order. In accordance with the UNESCO definition,

tolerance is “respect, acceptance, and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world’s cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human...Tolerance is harmony in difference” (Hjerm et al., 2020).

## CONCLUSION

Sociologists have come to the conclusion that inequalities based on race, class, and gender are unfair because these are largely attributed qualities that humans cannot do to change.

Religion is the basis for group affiliation and an important component of people's identity, which must be addressed with the same care as race, ethnicity, class and gender.

Research on other forms of stratification indicates that this phenomenon has harmful influence upon the society in general and the process that have taken place there. The same concerns the religious stratification. The importance of intergroup relations is great especially in the countries where the race, ethnicity or religion can cause the problems. It can destabilize the society. The investigation on religious stratification was done on the example of the USA as a country with multi race and religion population to find out some general conclusions but the same researches should be done in some other countries that may have the same problems caused by the migration and immigration.

The religious stratification started to develop in the colonial period in the USA. It led to the fact that more organized religious groups had a possibility to influence the law and their economic development with the further turning them into the elite class. Even taking into account that with the time the influence of the elites has reduced the gap still can be seen between the religious groups. It leads to discrimination in the possibilities to get the education and social-economic status. From year to year, it leads to the tension in the society, which appears in the intolerance between religious groups and even in the dissemination of nationalist and Nazi ideas among radical part of the society. Further, it will lead to the establishment of the radical groups that will come from the words to action. Such actions will increase religious stratification and discrimination and the level of crime and violence in the country. The country can expect a split with an aggravated religious or other stratification of society to the highest limit.

The reduction of religious stratification in a society will reduce the conflicts arising from this background.

The suggested solution is religion pluralism instead of stratification and equality of memberships, organizational capacities, and resources for the representatives of then different religions and to provide some legislative work on exclusion of religious ideology and access to various resources, regardless of religious beliefs. In this way any other harmful stratification can be reduced: by creating organizations of a social movement aimed at creating a society in which religious stratification (or any other kind of stratification) and its destabilizing effect are practically absent. Such organizations must counteract violations of laws that prohibit discrimination against others on the basis of religious or any other kind of affiliation. They should counter such abuses in a way that customs and cultural biases would be important steps towards reducing religious stratification and its destabilizing consequences.

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