

Comparison of marx and weber social stratification views



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“ Status groups, in contrasts with classes, are normally communities, though often of an amorphous kind. ... Class differences are connected in manifold ways with status differences... But status is not necessarily connected with a class situation” (Weber, Economy, and Society, 1920 in Selections in Translation, 1978, pp 48-9)

Compare Marx’s view of social stratification with that of Weber. Use ethnographic examples to illustrate your argument.

Social stratification is the hierarchal arrangement of individuals into the division of social class, groups, power, wealth and status in the society. In a Chinese society, there is a phrase ‘ Wealth will never pass more than three generations’. Undoubtly, inheriting wealth is one of the best ways of raising your status in society. Meanwhile, there are people rising social status with one’s effort by starting from scratching their own money. This different lifestyle is one the consequences of social stratification in the modern society. Different people will have different status in the society which leads to different appreciation and remuneration.

Social stratification exists in everywhere, even in different forms of society such as capitalist societies, communist societies or even in mixed societies. For example, there are different types of job in the communist society, and also many vacancies of jobs which require people to apply for them; at the same time, people are fighting for jobs in capitalist society.

The most common concept of social stratification is by different classes which mostly related to several socio-economic reasons. In anthropology, social class understood as a relationship to the means of production has <https://assignbuster.com/comparison-of-marx-and-weber-social-stratification-views/>

always been less central. Some research traditions have deliberately excluded the study of class differences, preferring to emphasize the unity and homogeneity of bounded cultural units. In general, class is classified into three categories in Western societies: the upper class, middle class and the lower class. There are also subdivisions within a class, usually subdivided by occupation.

For Karl Marx, class reflects the fundamental division of labour not simply possession of wealth. The size of one's purse is a purely quantitative difference. By which any two individuals of the same class may be brought into conflict. It is known as "on the basis of handicraft differences".

However, it is also equally well known that the modern class differences are not in any way based on handicraft differences. It is the division of labour that produces very diverse occupations within the same class. The centrality of class for Marx is that classes arise from the division of labour in production and act as agents in history; dominant classes are represented in and act through the state.

For Marx, classes do not emerge automatically but rather through a gradual process involving struggle. Moreover, human history is based on the build-up of tension between classes, which eventually leads to a revolution and the establishment of a new mode of production. In *Communist Manifesto* (1847), Marx says 'The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary

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reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of contending classes.' He also emphasized that the modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. In the contrary, it has established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones. Therefore, the society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great classes directly facing each other, i. e. Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.

So what made the formation of the two great classes, i. e. Bourgeoisie and Proletariat? Marx thought that the bourgeoisie has played a most revolutionary part. As the place of manufacture was taken by the giant, modern industry, bourgeoisies had been the leader of industrial armies. By bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage labour. The bourgeoisie exploit the world market by giving a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. They also keeps more and more doing away with the scattered state of the population of the means of production and property. When the productive forces at the disposal of society no longer tend to further the development of the conditions of bourgeois property; on the contrary, they have become too powerful for these conditions, by which they are fettered, as soon as they overcome these fetters, they bring disorder into the whole of bourgeois society, endanger the existence of bourgeois property.

Meanwhile, as the bourgeoisie is developed, the proletariat, i. e. the modern working class was developed which is considered as the class of labour. By proletarian, the class of modern wage labourers who, having no means of

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production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live. The proletariat can only live only as they have work, and who find work only as long as their labour increases capital. According to Marx (1847), these labour themselves is a commodity. The price of the commodity should be equal to the cost of production. In the other words, as the repulsiveness of the work increases, the wage decreases. Furthermore, in proportion as the use of machinery and division of labour increases, in the same proportion the burden of toil also increases, whether by prolongation of the working hours, by the increase of the work exacted in a given time or by increase speed of machinery.

In the condition of the proletariat, most of them are virtually swamped. The proletarian is without property and his relation to his wife and children has no longer anything in common with the bourgeois family relations. In addition, they cannot become masters of the production forces of society and they have nothing of their own to secure and to fortify. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest if the immense majority. The proletariats, who are the lowest stratum of our present society, cannot raise themselves up.

For Marx, social stratification is mainly classified by production. The relation of production is base on the employer-employee work conditions, division of labour means of production. He also raised the idea that communist society can solve the production of inequality brought by social stratification.

For Max Weber, he thought that bureaucratization will bring a greater level of social control. Weber developed the three-component of stratification, i. e.

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class, status and party. Class is a person's economic position in a society. In *Economy and Society* (1978: 926), Weber stated that "'mere economic" power, and especially "naked" money power, is by no means a recognized basis of social honor. Nor is power the only basis of social honor. Indeed, social honor, or prestige, may even be the basis of economic power, and very frequently has been.' He determined class situation by market situation. For Weber, 'class' is defined as: 1) When a number of people have in common a specific causal component of their life chances and (2) this component is represented exclusively by economic interests in the procession of goods and opportunities for income, and (3) is represented under the conditions of the commodity of labour markets. The mode of distribution, in accord with the law of marginal utility, excludes the non-wealthy from competing for highly valued goods; it favours the owner and gives them a monopoly to acquire such goods. Other things being equal, the mode of distribution monopolizes the opportunities for profitable deals for all those who. Provided with goods do not necessarily have to exchange them. The mode of distribution gives to the propertied a monopoly on the possibility of transferring property from the sphere of use as "wealth" to the sphere of "capital", i. e. it gives them the entrepreneurial function and all chances to share directly or indirectly in returns on capital. In his thoughts, class situation is ultimately market situation with 'property' and lack of property' are the basic categories.

Within these two categories, the class are further divided into subdivisions. It is according to the kind of property that is usable for returns and also the kind of service that can be offered in the market. According to *Economy and*

Society (1978: 927), there is always the generic connotation of the concept of class: that the kind of chance in the market is the decisive moment which presents a common condition for the individual's fate. Class situation is, in this sense, ultimately market situation. For slaves, whose fate is not determined by the chance of using goods or services for themselves on the market, are not known as class. They are a status group instead.

In Weber's ideas, status is the person's prestige, social honor and popularity in the society. In certain aspects, class distinctions are linked in the most varied ways with status distinctions. Weber shows that property is not always recognized as a status qualification, instead it is with extraordinary regularity. Moreover, status honor does not have to link with a class situation. Both propertied and propertyless people can belong to the same status group. Certain stratification of the social order has in fact been "lived in" and has achieved stability by virtue of a stable distribution of economic power.

For Weber, the general effect of status order is the hindrance of the free development of the market which this occurs first for the goods that status groups directly withhold from free exchange by monopolization. But they may be weakened the contrasts in the economic situation. They may strengthen it instead. In the political communities of Antiquity and of the Middle Ages, status stratification permeates a community. It brings wider effects than direct exclusion of special goods from the market. Weber thought that every technological repercussion and economic transformation threatens stratification of status and pushes the class situation into the foreground. It is because when the bases of the acquisition and distribution

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of goods are relatively stable, stratification by status as favoured. Therefore, the general economic conditions are made for the predominance of stratification by status. Every changes in economic stratification will lead to the growth of status structures and makes for a resuscitation of the importance of social honor.

Party is a person's ability to get their way despite of the resistance of the others. Within the sphere of the distribution of honour (due to class and status groups), the class and status group influence one another and the legal order are in turn influenced by it. 'Parties' reside in the sphere of power. Their action is oriented toward the acquisition of social power toward the influencing social action. According to Weber (1978: 938), parties may represent interests determined through class situation or status situation and they may recruit their following respectively from one or the other. The individuals are more likely to be the mixed types of purely class and purely status parties. Parties differ according to whether or not the community is stratified by status or by classes.

By comparing Weber's three component of stratification, class, status and parties all have different stratifications. Class are stratified according to their relations to the production and acquisition of goods. Status groups are stratified according to the principles of their consumption of goods as represented by special styles of life. Party always struggles for political control, which its organization is frequently strict and 'authoritarian'. However, there is one general observation of these three components is that they all presuppose a larger association, especially the framework of a policy, does not mean that they are confined to it.

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In conclusion, the major difference between Marx's view of social stratification than Weber is that Marx emphasized that the major cause of social stratification is due to different class groups in the society, especially the two major groups, i. e. Bourgeoisie and Proletariat. Weber emphasized on social status which is social honor which bring social stratification from economic transformation. Moreover, Weber also emphasized on other components such as party which Marx did not. Overall, the point of view of social stratification of Weber seems to be more applied to modern Western societies than Marx's point of view.