

Karl marx and max weber assignment

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The area of social stratification has been the starting point of many arguments about how and why societies are divided. Some societies will shout that they are classless whilst others will construct a whole culture around the divisions within. Individuals will vehemently point out that they are from one class when others have said differently. Some groups within society will inform other groups that they are in an especially disadvantaged position because of all the other groups advantaged position. In short, social stratification is a minefield waiting for the sociologist to jump into, backwards ND blindfolded.

However, even with this hostile environment, sociologists have tried to explain the reason why society is stratified. What follows is a brief analysis Of the ideas Of the two major stratification theorists, Karl Marx and Max Weber. For Marxist, class is a matter of economics, that is, how the individual fits into the pattern of modern capitalist society. Put simply, there are two main classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The bourgeoisie consist of those individuals who own the means of production, property, factories, and etc, and exploit the proletariat who only own, or can sell their Labour to the bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie gain profit from the proletariat by extracting surplus value, that is, by paying them less than the product is worth. Marx argued that the whole of capitalist society was constructed in order to support this idea including the society's infrastructure. One of the most important support mechanisms for the bourgeoisie being the creation of a false class consciousness for the proletariat, by which individuals do not feel that they

are exploited. Marx distinguished between a “ class in itself’ and a “ class for itself.

A class in itself is simply a social group whose members share the same relationship to the means of production. He goes on to argue that a social group only fully becomes a class when it becomes a class for itself. At this stage its members have achieved class consciousness and class solidarity. Class consciousness means that false class consciousness has been replaced by full awareness of the true situation, members of the same class develop a common identity and recognize their shared interest, with the end result being unity and the insight that only collective action will overthrow the argosies.

The important thing to remember is that for Marx and Marxist, class is all about conflict between economic groups. This conflict has the bourgeoisie (the minority) along with society’s infrastructure (education, religion, bureaucracy etc) on the one side and the proletariat (the majority) on the other. All relations between the two classes are economic and therefore there will be little chance to move from one class to another. Weber, on the other hand, argued that social stratification was not about economics alone. Weber argues that classes develop in market economies in which individuals moment for economic gain.

He defines a class as a group of individuals who share a similar position in a market economy, and by virtue of that fact receive similar economic rewards. Therefore, according to Weber, a person’s class situation is basically their market situation. Their market situation will directly affect

their chances of obtaining those things defined as desirable in society, for example access to higher education, good quality housing and health care. Like Marx, Weber argues that the major class division is between those who own the means of production and those who do not. However,

Weber sees important differences in the market situation of the property's groups in society, that is, different occupations and skills are judged as having different market values. Therefore factors other than ownership can affect social stratification. Weber identifies several other factors which can determine group formation and the stratification of society. While economic class forms one possible basis for group formation, collective action and the acquisition of political power, Weber argues that there are other bases for these activities. In particular, groups form because their members share a similar " status situation. Whereas class refers to the unequal distribution of economic rewards, status refers to unequal distribution of " social honor. " Occupations, ethnic and religious groups, and, most importantly, lifestyles are accorded differing degrees of prestige or esteem by members of society. This status is maintained through " group/social closure" whereby said groups make it difficult for individuals to join (a simple example would be that you can not become a recognized tradesman unless you undergo the official training recommended by said trades official body).

In modern societies, class and status are closely linked. Weber, however, identifies another important factor in determining social stratification, that of " party. " Weber defines parties as groups which are specifically concerned with influencing policies and making decisions in the interest of their membership – that is, they are concerned with the acquisition of " social

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power. " Parties include a variety of local and global associations, national political parties and a range of pressure groups and trade unions. Parties can represent interests determined by either/or class and status situation.

At the end of the day the individual's stratified position is determined by their economic class, their occupational status and their access to the polity of their society. Weeper's analysis of classes, status groups and parties suggest that no single theory can point and explain social stratification. The interplay of class, status and party in the formation of social groups is complex and variable and must be examined in an historical and cultural context. Marx attempted to reduce all forms nines laity to social class and argued that classes formed the only significant groups in society.

Weber argued that there exists a more complex interaction of factors when it comes to determining social stratification. It is important to realism that there have been many attempts at explaining social stratification since both Marx and Weber formulated their work. There is not, however, space does not permit me to enlarge upon my discussion. Both Marx and Weber were instrumental in starting the ongoing and increasingly fractured debate concerning social stratification. Contemporary writings have used their writings as a basis for understanding modern social divisions.

Both he analysis of gender divisions and race divisions have taken on the views of the above classic theorists, thus trying to undermine the generally accepted view that class and other social divisions are a functional necessity in modern western societies, a false view which ascribes degrees of success via a reward system based upon ones occupational achievements. As I

pointed out in the introduction to this essay, the study of social divisions is a minefield through which sociologists must trample, but to a large degree both Marx and Weber handed us the tools to make mine detection easier.