

Five social classes and consequence of their

Society



When sociologists talk of social class, they refer to a group of individuals who occupy a similar position in the economic system of production. Within that system occupation is very important because it provides financial rewards, stability and benefits like healthcare. Social classes are very complex, but “the relationship between power and wealth is undeniable.” (Marger 40) People can change the social class they are in, but it is not simply one factor that determines one’s social class. Occupation, income, wealth, education, and status are all major factors that can help determine which of the five social classes a person belongs. An individual can change his or her social class if they have the desire to do so

Many sociologists suggest five:

Upper Class - Elite

Represent institutional leadership, heads of multinational corporations, foundations, universities Capitalist elite - owners of lands, stocks and bonds and other assets - wealth derived from what they own Forbes magazine publishes a list of the 400 wealthiest families in America. In 1997, net worth had to be at least \$475 million. Bill Gates, in that year, had net worth of \$39.8 billion. Of all the wealth represented on the Forbes list, more than half is inherited. Newly acquired wealth, nouveau riche, have vast amounts of money but not often accepted into “old money” circles.

Upper Middle Class

Represent scientific and technical knowledge - engineers, accountants, lawyers, architects, university faculty, managers and directors of public and private organizations. Have both high incomes and high social prestige. Well-

educated. Difficult to define a “ middle class” (i. e. upper middle, middle middle and lower middle) probably the largest class group in the United States - because being middle class is more that just income, about lifestyles and resources, etc.

Lower	Middle	Class
Clerical-administrative		
Provide support	for	professionals
Engage in data collection.,		record-keeping
Paralegals.,	bank tellers,	sales
Blue-collar workers in skilled trades		

Working Class

Craft workers

Laborers in factories

Restaurant workers

Nursinghome staff

Repair shops, garages

Delivery services

Poor

Working poor - work full-time at wages belowpovertyline

Social services

Underclass

Social class is one of the most important concepts that sociologists discuss and yet its definition is often illusive. There are two classical sociologists who are most important in the discussions about class . Karl Marx and Max
<https://assignbuster.com/five-social-classes-and-consequence-of-their/>

Weber have different views upon social class in contemporary societies. In Karl Marx's perspective, social class has a two-class system whereas Max Weber argued that social class has three dimensions of stratification: class, status and party. And what is frustrating about both is that they did not produce a viable definition of the things that they wrote extensively about.

Karl Marx: 1818-1883

Karl Marx argued there are two major social classes, the ruling class who own the means of production and the subject class, who don't own the means of production and are a diverse group of people controlled by and working for the ruling class. These two groups are better known as the bourgeoisie and proletariat. In particular, the bourgeoisie use a mode of production, in the form of capitalism, to oppress the proletariat. Whereby the owners of production (bourgeoisie) use the (proletariat) workers labour to produce their surplus value. In turn they pay their workers the smallest amount possible to make a profit, thus exploiting the working class.

The defining factor in what makes them a separate class is the bourgeoisie's ownership of the means of production, not their wealth, because they don't produce the surplus value, the proletariat do. The bourgeoisie only appropriate the surplus. In essence the bourgeoisie are a 'class for itself' whereas the proletariat are a 'class in itself'. Marx identifies that the reason we have classes is due to a group sharing a common interest and economic position. The bourgeoisie own the capital of land, machinery and raw materials. Whereas the proletariat own nothing, they can only sell their labour power in an attempt to survive and provide for their families. This in

turn results in the social/power relations between the bourgeoisie and proletariat.

Max Weber: 1864 - 1920

While Weber agrees with Marx's theory of the class distinction between the bourgeoisie and proletariat, he is more interested in the individual's market value. For Weber, an individual's class position is determined by their current market value. This market value is established by the individual's level of education, natural talent, skills and acquired knowledge. With these skills the individual is opened to numerous life chances and opportunities to further their career and increase their standard of living. Their market value equals their economic gain. Market value is defined by their ability to market themselves to a particular job opportunity. For instance, a university degree makes an individual more marketable and as such they have greater chances to work in their preferred field. They are given greater financial rewards and in turn move up the social ladder.

Consequences of social class

Different consumptions of social goods is the most visible consequence of class. In modern societies it manifests as income, inequality, through the subsistence societies it manifested as malnutrition and periodic starvation. The conditions at work vary greatly depending on class. Those in the upper-middle class and middle class enjoy greater freedom in their occupations. They are generally more respected, enjoy more diversity and are able to exhibit some authority. Those in lower classes tend to feel more alienated and have lower work satisfaction overall. The physical conditions of the work

place differ greatly between classes. While middle class workers may "suffer alienating conditions" or "lack of job satisfaction", blue-collar workers suffer alienating, often routine, work with obvious physical health hazards, injury and even death.

In the more social sphere, class has direct consequences on lifestyle. Lifestyle includes tastes, preferences, and general style of living. These lifestyles could quite possibly affect education attainment, and therefore status attainment. Class lifestyle also affects how children are raised. For example, a working class person is more likely to raise their child to be a working class and middle class are more likely to be raised in middle-class. This perpetuates the idea of class for future generations.

Since social class is often self-reported, it is difficult to assure the accuracy of the information collected. Even if the data is accurate, social classes are not the same in each region or city. What constitutes upper class in one location may be middle class in another. The lack of consistency involved in researching social class accounts for the difficulty in using it as a reliable variable. Schools and the workplace are greatly influenced by social class.

The look of employment is changing because workers can no longer expect to work their way up through a company. Many companies look outside of the company for people with the right educational background instead of hiring from within. This greatly limits the potential for advancement of workers who lack formal education. For people to move up in the social hierarchy, they must obtain higher education. Instead of spending years at a lower level position, people are spending more time in school and moving

directly into management. . Therefore at this day and age, more importance is givin to education in order for one to work his way up the social ladder.