

Sociology theorists

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Karl Marx The discrepancies and differences of wealth distribution results to the seemingly never ending battle between the bourgeoisie (ruling class) and the proletariat (working class). In this struggle, Marx argued that the proletariat is frequently put into compromising situations. This is despite of the fact that production per se, heavily relies on the shoulders of the working class. Marx firmly argued that history is primarily shaped and defined by the constant clashes of the ruling class and the proletariat. The modes of production play a significant role in Marx's thesis.

Marx emphasized that production modes are consist of two important factors. These are the forces and relations of production. The forces of production pertain to the necessary skills, technology and machineries needed to produce goods. On the other hand, it is the relations of productions that will determine the social class that can fully enjoy the benefits of production. Oftentimes it is the bourgeoisies that accumulate much of the gain. Since they have the capital to purchase the necessary raw materials and machineries, they get much of the profit.

This is in stark contrast to the proletariat which has nothing to offer but their labor power. The truth of the matter is, it is through cheap labor that the ruling classes are able to ensure their positions within the economic ladder. In other words, it is through the proletariats' blood and sweat that the ruling class thrives. Marx perceived this scenario as outright exploitation. The exploitation of the working class results to " alienation. " There is alienation since the proletariat is denied of the goods that they themselves produced.

Their meager salaries are barely enough to address their everyday needs. Thus, they can no longer afford to purchase additional goods. The working class is also subject to alienation in the actual production process. Because of the unreasonable demands and the unhealthy environment in the workplace, not to mention the extremely low salary, the “intrinsic value” of the rendered work and effort diminish (Du Gay, 1996). Despite of these situations, the working class endures these conditions. The bourgeoisie created a reserve army of the unemployed.

Capitalists can easily find a replacement whereas this could be a hard endeavor for the proletariat primarily because of the stiff competition among other members of the working class. In order to resolve this problem, Marx believed that workers have to unite and consider revolution in countering their oppressors. Ralf Dahrendorf, on the other hand is highly influenced by the social inequalities articulated by Marx. However, if Marx places heavy emphasis on the economic aspect of class conflict, Dahrendorf’s main contentions revolve around the distribution of authority and power.

More than anything else, Dahrendorf stresses that it is coercion rather than consensus that lays down the foundations of “social order (Slattery, 2003).” Power legitimacy is instrumental in Dahrendorf’s arguments. It is because only those whose authority is acknowledged and recognized can fully assert their respective interests via manipulation or control or imposing legal restraints. Therefore, under this circumstance, coercion becomes possible. However, it is important to note that the quest for power is readily felt in all

aspect of society, be it in the workplace or even within the confines of a home (Slattery, 2003).

In the context of capitalistic societies, however, Dahrendorf stressed that the ruling class are the ones who are usually in power. The societal positions that they hold, take for example in the political arena provide them with legitimate power and authority. On the other hand, it can be observed that subordinate groups cannot fully participate into the whole discourse of power distribution. Their absence in the authority sphere thus compels the subordinate class to obey and adhere to the conditions set by the governing class.

Apparently, this situation extends beyond the relationships formed in the production process. Dahrendorf took into consideration In as much as there is coercion, conflicts are inevitable. Conflicts generally enter the limelight once power and authority are questioned. This occurs primarily because the dominating group would always strive for power retention whereas subordinate groups would always call for change. Given this situation at hand, Dahrendorf presented three types of groups. These are the quasi, interest and conflict groups (Slattery, 2003).

Basically, quasi groups are the ones which occupy a societal position that embody a certain interest (“ quasi group,” n. d). The moment these quasi groups converge and establish a well-defined structure, it becomes an interest group (“ interest group,” n. d). But once interest groups exercised direct action geared towards change, interest groups transform into a conflict group (Slattery, 2003). Dahrendorf further stressed that in settings

wherein high degrees of conflict is felt, radical changes are expected (Slattery, 2003).

Yet, when violence occurs, the change becomes a radical one (Slattery, 2003). Max Weber Class, status and party are three important components in Weber's social stratification analysis (Kelly, 1980). Weber stressed that it is the "market position" that determines class. The ability of an individual to acquire goods specifies his or her class. Status groups, in the meantime, thrive on honor and prestige that are given to them (Singh, 1976). The mark of respect rendered unto them is based on specific lifestyles and rituals that they religiously follow.

Lastly, parties, compared to two other groups, are more concerned on acquiring power to assert their claims and respective advocacies (Kelly, 1980). Party members may either come from class or status groups (Kelly, 1980). In the context of ethnic segregation and caste systems, these are observable in status groups. Status groups have distinct lifestyle patterns. They have their own belief systems, norms and mores. Status is retained via abiding the laws and religious orders (Levine, 1998). Ethnic groups are characterized by the commonality of their beliefs, tradition and culture (Malesevic, 2004).

Therefore, in instances wherein, tensions, disputes and discrepancies arise, ethnic groups may eventually evolve into a closed caste system. Evidently, caste systems are known for their strict observance of hierarchy wherein one group is considered more superior than the others. Weber believed that the hierarchy system in caste groups is essential in molding the political

structures of status groups (Malesevic, 2004). However, it is also important to note that while less privileged groups are duly subjugated, these groups retain core values that do not readily conform to what the dominant groups propagate.

Weber used the Jews as a classic example (Levine, 1998). Despite of being subjected to derogatory perceptions, Jews maintain certain beliefs that reaffirm their notion of status and privilege. Apparently, the stratification that occurs among status groups can be attributed to the degree of acquired honor and privilege. These are the things that cannot be fully achieved by mere market and economic relationships and associations. Emile Durkheim Durkheim was particularly concerned on how social order is maintained in society and how social connections are formed among individuals.

In this aspect, Durkheim was particularly concerned on how division of labor affects and influences social integration. But then again, it is important to note that Durkheim's idea of division of labor does not emanate from a highly economic perspective. Division of labor, under Durkheim's arguments is not concentrated on the production process. Instead, Durkheim argued that division of labor can generate connections and relationships among different individuals (Morrison, 2006). Consequently, division of labor also determines the kind of associations and linkages that exist between society and its respective members.

The existing relationship of an individual and society lays down the foundations of social solidarity (Morrison, 2006). Durkheim presented two kinds of solidarity that can be observed in every society. These are

mechanical and organic solidarity (Morrison, 2006). Mechanical solidarity is present in communities wherein its members perform similar economic tasks. Work specialization can be hardly observed in this arena. Since societal members execute similar practices, collective consensus can be easily formed.

There is a sharing of core orientations and beliefs. Therefore, in the event wherein social deviations occur, penal and repressive laws are imposed in order to maintain social unity (Morrison, 2006). On the other hand, organic solidarity takes place in societies wherein a high degree of labor specialization is manifested. This results to the absence of similar concerns and perspectives. While it is true that organic solidarity makes individuals more dependent to each other, their dependence are rooted to individualistic sentiments rather than a collective one.

This is primarily due to the fact that labor specialization literally destroys the commonalities that bind societal members. Relatively, when social order is challenged, restitutive reprimands, which are aimed to restore society in its original state, are sought (Morrison, 2006). Theory contrast and comparison Evidently, it can be observed that Karl Marx's arguments are highly based on economics. Marx did not simply forego how the operations and mechanisms of productions contribute or influence the individual's social class.

Evidently, the processes involved in wealth accumulation outline the disparities of the proletariat and the bourgeoisies. However, it is also apparent that in class determination, Weber shares certain similarities with Marx. The fact that Weber acknowledged the fact that market positions—as

well as the capabilities of an individual to consume, are class determinants, clearly signify that social class cannot be fully articulated if its economic influences are taken out of the entire picture.

On the other hand, while Dahrendorf and even Weber for that matter, concentrate on power distribution, it can be clearly seen that such an argument share similarities with Marx's base and superstructure concept (Sanderson, 2001). Marx argued that the influences of the governing class or the bourgeoisies are not limited to economics alone. Because the ruling party possesses the necessary means, they can also assert their domination in the cultural, political and social domain (Sanderson, 2001).

Thus, it can be fairly argued in here that inequalities in power distribution are also related to unjust wealth distribution. First of all, it cannot be denied that those who are in power are also the ones who have dominated the economic aspect of their respective communities. The ones who are holding the seat of authority and control have the upper hand in the production process. Consequently, they are also using their economic advantage to secure their positions in the political and cultural field. Take for example the case of business tycoons and magnates.

In capitalistic societies, they are the ones that readily dictate the flow of the market. If contextualized within Weber's view, the market positions of these individuals are much better compared to others. They can accumulate goods that other members of society cannot enjoy or in many instances, these are the people that are generally responsible for the production of various commodities. They are not just plain consumers, they are also the producers.

Under these circumstances, they accumulate power and authority. They can affect or impact government policies and regulations.

Perhaps, the only difference is that power manifestation is implicitly practiced rather than overtly manifested. This basically explains why Dahrendorf placed heavy importance on the issue of power legitimacy. But nonetheless, despite of this distinction, Marx's influences are still very much evident. In as far as power distribution is concerned; it can be also observed that Dahrendorf's concept of interests groups exemplify similarity with Weber's status groups. However, the parallelism breaks when interest groups into a conflict group that aggressively calls for an outright system change.

As for the case of Weber, however, status groups result to caste systems where a certain degree of exclusivity is manifested and conflicts are primarily rooted on racial and ethnic concerns. In here, it can be readily argued that the main aims or goals of Dahrendorf's conflict groups are highly concentrated on achieving equality or ultimately overthrow the prevailing system. However, as for the case of caste systems, there is a seemingly open acceptance of subordination. The reason behind this is that power distribution and legitimacy under Weber's context is determined by highly embedded cultural and traditional belief systems.

This is also true as for the case of Dahrendorf. Conflict groups also have deep-seated values and opinions. However, these are not purely based on ethnicity alone. On the other hand, if one has to take a closer look, it can be seen that the process of sharing core values and beliefs by ethnic groups can

be described as a classic example of Durkheim's mechanical solidarity.

Ethnic communities follow social norms and behaviors that are highly different from the majority of the population.

In addition to that, members of ethnic communities continue to share similar labor experiences that shape and define their collective consciousness, goals and aspirations. They share the same sentiments and concerns which make their societal structure more cohesive. It is also a fact that in ethnic settings social deviations are readily punished with repressive sanctions. This is most especially true if religious dogmas are readily violated. However, while Durkheim's division of labor proves to be beneficial in Weber's status groups, such receives no merit as for the case of Marx.

As for Marx, division of labor further widens the gap between the ruling class and the proletariat (Kain, 1993). The truth of the matter is, division of labor is highly instrumental in the exploitation of the working class. Division of labor prohibits the proletariat from further improving his or her craft simply because he or she is compelled to execute the same tasks. Division of labor impedes the worker's creativity and lessens the artistic value of a particular product by turning it into a mere commodity.