

# [‘the marxism (conflict theory), functionalism (consensus theory) and](https://assignbuster.com/the-marxism-conflict-theory-functionalism-consensus-theory-and/)

‘ The history of allhitherto existing society is the history of class struggles’ Class stratification and inequality has been the startingpoint for many debates and arguments about why and how societies are divided. Thereare several sociological perspectives that all have different ideas andtheories on this topic, including Marxism (conflict theory), Functionalism(consensus theory) and Social action. This essay will be focusing on classstratification from the perspective of conflict theory.

Marxism was introduced by Karl Marx (1818 – 1883). Marxbelieved that society was divided into two classes, the Bourgeoisie which isthe ruling class and the Proletariats which is the lower and working class (Burton, 2013). He believed that the bourgeoisie exploited and abused the proletariat.  The main difference between these two groupsis the ownership and control of production. This then causes conflict betweenthe two classes. Institutions such as the media, education and the law areused by the bourgeoisie to define and influence social class (Blunden, 2013).

Capitalism plays a significant role in the Marxistperspective. Marx believed that capitalism would lead to the division of thetwo classes; the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. This wouldmake it much harder for the lower classes to have success in their life as wellas gaining social mobility. Marx argues that a social group can only become aclass when it becomes a class for itself. This means that the members have classconsciousness which is when they have full awareness of the situation and classsolidarity. Both of the social classes have dependence and conflict.

In acapitalist society, the bourgeoisie and proletariat need each other. Labourersmust sell their labour to survive and make a living as they do not own part ofthe production, therefore they depend on the capitalists. The capitalistsdepend on the labourers as there would be no production without them.

This isnot equality because it is a relationship of exploiter and exploited. Theruling class (bourgeoisie) are gaining at the expense of the subject class(proletariat) which is why there is a conflict of interest between them. Marx felt that the basic contradictions held in acapitalist economic system would eventually lead to destruction.

Theproletariat would overrule the bourgeoisie by taking the means of production, which he believed was the source of power. After this, property would become communallyowned and since all society members would be equal. The result would be aclassless society. A major strength of Marxism is that theoretically, itwould have a greater understanding on how to run a society. It would be morebeneficial if we had societies where individuals did not subject anyone elseand where no one was poor. This is what Marxism promises, although nothing haschanged as of yet.

Another strength is that it looks at society as a whole whichallows it to acknowledge all the social forces involved and the interests ofpower from different groups within the society. The conflict between the bourgeoisieand the proletariat is effective at explaining change in society. The societyis organised under capitalism and the bourgeoisie maximizes profit with theproletariat. \*\*\*\*\* Overall, this theory analyses the power andconflict within societies.

It explains why there can be an unequal distributionof power and wealth between social classes. \*\*\*\*\*\*\* A weakness of the Marxist perspectiveis that it does not see the significance of private ownership. Whilst you couldbe given a place to live, you will not have private property or ownership, which means that you may no longer have control.

Another weakness is that itcan negatively affect the educational system. Marxist education believes that itis all controlled by the government for example, the teaching methods, curriculum and exam system would be determined by the government and does notallow external agencies to be involved.  Karl Marx’swork was supported in “ Class in a Capitalist Society” (reference). Using various sources ofdata, Westergaard and Resler looked at the existence of classes and argued thataspects such as the taxation, ownership of property, social mobility and educationare complex. The complexity is that there is clear evidence of a dividedsociety over class boundaries. They came to the decisionthat class stratification was the main form of inequality in the UnitedKingdom.

A ruling class creating the 5-10% richest, which meant that theirclass had a larger amount of wealth than the lower class which was 30%. Marx workwas updated by John Westergaard and Henrietta Resler in 1976.  Inconclusion, Marxists perspective on class stratification is that society isdivided into two classes; the bourgeoisie, which is the ruling class and theproletariats, which is the working class. This theory can analyse the power andconflict within societies and can explain why there can be an unequal distributionof power and wealth between the bourgeoisie and the proletariats.

Bibliography