

'the marxism (conflict theory), functionalism (consensus theory) and



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' 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 classtratification 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 a capitalist society, the bourgeoisie and proletariat need each other.

Labourers must sell their labour to survive and make a living as they do not own part of the production, therefore they depend on the capitalists. The capitalists depend on the labourers as there would be no production without them.

This is not equality because it is a relationship of exploiter and exploited.

The ruling 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 a capitalist economic system would eventually lead to destruction.

The proletariat would overrule the bourgeoisie by taking the means of production, which he believed was the source of power. After this, property would become communally owned and since all society members would be equal. The result would be a classless society. A major strength of Marxism is that theoretically, it would have a greater understanding on how to run a society. It would be more beneficial if we had societies where individuals did not subject anyone else and where no one was poor. This is what Marxism promises, although nothing has changed as of yet.

Another strength is that it looks at society as a whole which allows it to acknowledge all the social forces involved and the interests of power from different groups within the society. The conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is effective at explaining change in society. The society is organised under capitalism and the bourgeoisie maximizes profit with

the proletariat. ***** Overall, this theory analyses the power and conflict within societies.

It explains why there can be an unequal distribution of power and wealth between social classes. ***** A weakness of the Marxist perspective is that it does not see the significance of private ownership. Whilst you could be 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 it can negatively affect the educational system. Marxist education believes that it is all controlled by the government for example, the teaching methods, curriculum and exam system would be determined by the government and does not allow external agencies to be involved. Karl Marx's work was supported in "Class in a Capitalist Society" (reference). Using various sources of data, Westergaard and Resler looked at the existence of classes and argued that aspects such as the taxation, ownership of property, social mobility and education are complex. The complexity is that there is clear evidence of a divided society over class boundaries. They came to the decision that class stratification was the main form of inequality in the United Kingdom.

A ruling class creating the 5-10% richest, which meant that their class had a larger amount of wealth than the lower class which was 30%. Marx work was updated by John Westergaard and Henrietta Resler in 1976. In conclusion, Marxists perspective on class stratification is that society is divided into two classes; the bourgeoisie, which is the ruling class and the proletariat, which is the working class. This theory can analyse the power and conflict within

societies and can explain why there can be an unequal distribution of power and wealth between the bourgeoisie and the proletariats.

Bibliography