

Weber a the protestant ethic sociology essay



Marx Weber in his writing entitled “ The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism”, has had an enduring impact on the field of economic history. Weber presents the argument that religion in certain forms and ways had a critical influence modern capitalist economy and society. He believes that Puritan ethics and ideas influenced the development of capitalism.

He supports his argument by examining the relationship between the ethnics of ascetic Protestantism and the beginnings of modern capitalism. Weber presents the problem of linking religion to the spirit of capitalism. He explains different religions and how they play into his study. Weber begins by comparing the differences between Catholics and Protestants. Although Weber admits that through history some of the richer areas tended to covert to Protestantism and that Protestants generally had a greater inherited wealth, this does not entirely explain the greater participation in capitalism shown by the Protestants. He believes that environment has a great effect on determining choice of occupation, but that Protestants have also shown a strong tendency to develop economic rationalism more so than Catholics. One explanation Weber provides for this is that Catholics tend to be more “ otherworldly” than Protestants and therefore do not put as much importance on material gains. Weber mentions “ Catholics show a stronger propensity to remain in their crafts that is they more often become master craftsmen, whereas the Protestants are attracted to a larger extent into the factories in order to fill the upper ranks of skilled labour and administrative position” (Weber, 3).” Catholics answer with the accusation that materialism results from the secularization of all ideals through Protestantism” (Weber, 4). Even though Catholic gets involved in economic activities, Protestants have

stronger tendency to develop economic rationalism and Catholic criticizes Protestant's materialism. He bases his argument on his observations in Germany and elsewhere, and this is why he focuses his argument on the Protestants. Weber also explains about the spirit of capitalism. There are conceptualizing the spirit of capitalism. Weber presents excerpt from the writings of Benjamin Franklin. Franklin writes that time is money, credit is money, and the good paymaster is lord of another man's purse. Franklin's moral beliefs are useful to promote profit for individuals. Weber mentions " It is, namely, by no means exceptional, but rather the rule, for him to have a sort of modesty which is essentially more honest than the reserve which Franklin so shrewdly recommends" (Weber, 19). In addition, Weber mentions about the importance of accepting capitalistic system to make money. He says " the capitalistic system so needs this devotion to the calling of making money it is an attitude toward material goods which is so well suited to that system, so intimately bound up with the conditions of survival in the economic struggle for existence"(Weber, 19). Weber also makes a point about ' calling' and reformation. Weber does not think that ' calling' explain the spirit of capitalism. Weber mentions that Luther developed the conception and activity as a reformer. However, Weber says that Martin Luther was a traditionalist and so believed in obedience to God's will and acceptances of the way things are, that Lutheranism did not have great significance in the development of the capitalistic spirit. Weber argues that there is no relationship between the spirit of capitalism and reformation and tries to see how religion has impact on material cultures' development. Weber says " we have no intention whatever of maintain such a foolish and doctrinaire thesis, as that the spirit of capitalism could only have arisen as

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the result of certain effects of the Reformation, or even that capitalism as an economic system is creation of the Reformation" (Weber, 28).

Weber also mentions four principal forms of ascetic Protestantism which are Calvinism, Pietism, Methodism, and Baptist movement. He continues by explaining some of the values involved with these other sects although its clear that Calvinism will be the most important to his argument. Weber assumes that Calvinism influences in Western Europe in the seventeenth century. He notices that western Europe had followed Calvinist Protestantism. Calvinists saw their work as a " calling" from God and it was a moral duty. " God does not exist for men, but men for the sake of God. All creation, including of course the fact, as it undoubtedly was for Calvin, that only a small proportion of men are chose for eternal grace, can have any meaning only as means to the glory and majesty of God"(Weber, 33). They believed in the elect. They are chosen and predestined by God. However, Lutheran Protestantism was different. It believed that people could earn a place in Heaven through good works on earth. It seems capitalist ideology, but Lutheran Protestantism encouraged people to earn no more than they needed to survive. The problem with Calvinist Protestantism was that they did not know they would go to hell or heaven. Weber mentions " on the one hand it is held to be an absolute duty to consider oneself chosen, and to combat all doubts are temptations of the devil"(Weber, 37). Their uncertainty led them to work hard and that was for God's favor. So their hard work led to the development of capitalism. They denied comfort and pleasure to themselves and despised laziness and hedonism. They made money for its own sake. Weber emphasizes that the spirit of capitalism is the

values and attitude behind making money. Weber concludes that religion could cause economic change. Pietism is closely connected with Calvinism and gets influences by Lutheran Protestantism. However according to Weber it has an uncertain basis for asceticism and is therefore less consistent than Calvinism. Methodism has a similar uncertain foundation similar to Pietism and is also has some key differences from Calvinism's doctrinal basis. And finally the Baptist sects had quite a different foundation than Calvinism. Finally, Weber wants to figure out the relationships between ascetic Protestantism and the spirit of capitalism. Overall, Weber's intent was to prove the positive correlation between capitalist spirit and Protestant religion.

B. Choose one article from the list at the end of this exam

In the article, " Ethnic Differences in Endorsement of the Protestant Work Ethic: The Role of Ethnic Identity and Perceptions of Social Class" by Kevin Cokley, Komarraju, Pickett, Shen, Patel, Belur, and Rosales, examined ethnic differences in endorsement of the Protestant work ethic (PWE) among Black and White college students and differences in ethnic identity and perceptions of social class mediated the relationship between ethnicity and the endorsement of PWE values.

The Protestant Work Ethic (PWE) is an important aspect of U. S and authors mentions the traditional American values which have been associated with White culture, includes individualism, competition, orientation, and the PWE. Authors mention " the PWE is a value system that stresses the moral value of work, self-discipline, and individual responsibility in forming a way to improve one's economic well-being" (Cokley et al 2007: 76). They found that <https://assignbuster.com/weber-a-the-protestant-ethic-sociology-essay/>

the PWE is related to attributions of greater personal obligation. However, Niles stated that there seems to be a stronger commitment to a ' Protestant' work ethic among non-Protestant cultures. They found that the PWE is now more a reflection of culture than of religious values or nationality. Authors examined multi cultural differences in the PWE within the United States and their goal was to find which ethnicity might affect endorsement of the PWE.

According to Cokley et al, differences in the importance of ethnic identity arise among ethnic minorities and Whites and ethnic identity carries in importance and strength among ethnic group members. They say " we believed that cultural values like the PWE that promote individual responsibility while minimizing the impact of societal oppression on ethnic minorities such as Blacks would be negatively related to ethnic identity" they also found that well- educated individuals are less likely to endorse PWE values due to the fact that well- educated individuals are more likely to be aware of systems of oppression, such as racism, sexism, homophobia. In addition, the PWE is also related to social class. They figure out " Blacks face more negative perceptions about their work ethic from employers than do Whites and that employer see inner-city poor Blacks as especially problematic" (Cokley et al 2007: 79).

Authors used three measures which are Protestant Ethic Scale (PES), Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (NEIM), and Demographic sheet. After they examined, they found that Black students the PWE was not significantly correlated with ethnic identity. Blacks were higher in ethnic identity than were Whites, but the relationship between ethnic identity and PWE was not

significant. However, they found that ethnic identity and perceptions of social class can count for ethnic differences in endorsement of the PWE.

Black students had a significantly lower PWE compared with White students. This indicates that they were less likely to believe that works hard will succeed. They mention " the Black students or their close friends and family members may have had experiences that led them to believe that an individual's life outcomes are influenced by much more than simply hard work because there are other external, uncontrollable social forces(racism, sexism, discrimination) that can influence outcomes more than does one's own individual effort. On the other hand, whites are opposite. They tend to believe a strong positive relationship between working hard and achieving success. It indicates that White students were more likely to endorse PWE beliefs than were Black students. They mention " the most significant result of this study was the emergence of perceptions of social class as the only significant mediator" (Cokley et al 2007: 85). It shows that upper middle class and upper class had a significantly stronger PWE than working class or middle class among Whites, but not Blacks. They argue that social class is an important because they believe that social class might influence the cultural psychology of different ethnic groups. They mention " the Blacks in the present study, regardless of perceived social class, were less likely to endorse the PWE, perhaps because they may have experienced first hand that the application of the PWE does not always result in meritocratic economic outcomes" (Cokley et al 2007: 87).

2.

A. Basic elements of bureaucracy that Weber describes.

In the article, "Bureaucracy", Weber believes that bureaucracy is a particular type of administrative structure developed through authority. Weber attributes the development of bureaucracy to the increase in rationalization in modern societies. Weber says "Bureaucracy, thus understood, is fully developed in political and ecclesiastical communities only in the modern state, and, in the private economy, only in the most advanced institutions of capitalism" (Weber 1946: 196). Weber argues that bureaucracies have existed in places such as Egypt, the Roman Catholic Church, and China. Weber mentions "a certain measure of a developed money economy is the normal precondition for the unchanged and continued existence, if not for the establishment, of pure bureaucratic administrations" (Weber 1946: 205).

Bureaucracy is organized as a hierarchical system of offices that are governed by rules. For Weber the term bureaucracy are inseparable from the term rationality. According to Weber, there are ways of developing bureaucracies rational which are functional specialization, clear lines of hierarchical authority, expert training of managers, and decision making based on rules. Weber argues that such specialization is essential to a rational bureaucracy. His idea of functional specialization applies to persons within an organization and to relations between larger units or divisions of the organization. For example, work was broken down into many special tasks and employees were assigned few such tasks. Divisions of large organizations require clear lines of authority organized in a hierarchy. And

division of labour is more fundamental than the others because it initiates and orders other divisions of labour. In addition, hierarchical authority is required in bureaucracies so that highly trained experts can be properly used as managers. He argues that managers at all levels have to be trained for their specific jobs. He mentions "the demand for administration by trained experts is considerable, and the party followings have to recognize an intellectually developed, educated, and freely moving 'public opinion', the use of unqualified officials falls back upon the party in power at the next election" (Weber 1946: 201).

"Development is greatly furthered by the social prestige of the educational certificates acquired through such specialized examinations. This is all the more the case at the educational patent is turned to economic advantage" (Weber 1946: 241). Weber mentions the importance of education which can develop economic.

Lastly, Weber makes a point that rational bureaucracies must be managed in accordance with carefully developed rules and principles that can be learned and applied and that transactions and decisions must be recorded so that rules can be reviewed. He mentions "the management of the office follows general rules, which are more or less stable, more or less exhaustive, and which can be learned" (Weber, 1946: 198). Weber sees bureaucracy as one of the most important causes of the development of capitalism specifically.

B. The strengths and dangers of bureaucracy that Weber describes.

According to Max Weber, that bureaucracy are the most efficient form of administration and inevitable in the modern society. Weber offers a positive of bureaucracy through his ideal description of the administrative system as a rational and efficient type of organization. Bureaucracy is an administrative structure through hierarchical relations and pre-established spheres of competence. “ the large corporation as a type of bureaucratic organization that rivaled the state bureaucracy in achieving rational efficiency and calculated results” (Rubenstein 1978: 55).

One of the strengths of bureaucracy is conduct of official business in strict accordance with the duty of every member, chosen through impersonal criteria to perform designated tasks subject to strict rules of practice. He mentions “ Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict, subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personal costs, these are raised to the optimum points in the strictly bureaucratic administration.” (Weber1946: 214). Also, Weber says that the organizations structuring into a vertical hierarchy to be governed by the rights to supervision and appeal. The military is an example of bureaucratic organization. Weber says “ Specifically, military discipline and technical training can be normally and fully developed, at least to its modern high level, only in the bureaucratic army” (Weber 1946: 222). “ Its specific nature, which is welcomed by capitalism, develops the more perfectly the more the bureaucracy is ‘ dehumanized’, the more completely it succeeded, in eliminating form official business love, hatred, and all purely personal,

irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation”(Weber 1946: 216).

However, Weber also fears that people would become too controlled by people who are superior and too much rules and regulations deprive of people's freedom. Weber argues about the consequences of bureaucracies in modern societies. He feels they represented a grave threat to individual liberty. Also, bureaucracy provides structure of domination. Governance in a class-based society resulted to abuse of power of the tope leadership resulting to corruption, and political infighting. A bureaucracy is organized as a hierarchical system of offices that are governed by rules. Each office has a sphere of tasks, and the offices operate and interact according to an explicit se of procedures. Power resides in offices. Office holders merely act out the responsibilities of their offices. furthermore, He notes " No machinery in the world functions so precisely as this apparatus of men and, moreover, so cheaply...rational calculation, reduces every worker to a cog in this bureaucratic machine and, seeing himself in this light, he will merely ask how to transform himself into a somewhat bigger cog.. The passion for bureaucratization drives us to despair" (Weber). Power is exercise by bureaucrats whose interest is in regulation rather than principles. Individual are lost in the vast machinery of the bureaucratic organization. These bureaucracies become structures of domination. They govern social action on a regular basis, and they establish and sustain patterns of inequality.

Weber mentions " the bureaucratic tendency has chiefly been influenced by needs arising from the creation of standing armies as determined by power

politics and by the development of public finance connected with the military establishment" (Weber 1946: 212). Weber implies that

" the decisive reason for the advance of bureaucratic organization has always been its purely technical superiority over any other form of organization" (Weber 1946: 214).

" the fully developed bureaucratic mechanism" he was aware of the fact that actual bureaucracies seldom achieve the level of efficiency of the " ideal type" he had constructed"(Rubenstein 1978: 23).

" Weber's writings on bureaucracy are part of a larger attempt to understand the social and political structure and the values of modern Western civilization" (Rubenstein 1978: 27).

3. According to Marx, the class struggle under capitalism is between those who own the means of production, the ruling class or bourgeoisie and those who labor for a wage, the working class or proletariat. " the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles"(Marx, Engels 1848, 3). The worker is as part of the machinery. " a class of laborers, who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labor increases capital"(Marx, Engels 1848, 8). Weber also describes that the ruling class makes the rules that structure society. Marx made a set of demands which are 10 points programs. He believes that the implementation of those policies would lead to a classless and stateless society.

A. The Cunning of History by Rubenstein mentions " as uprooted men and women were forced to move from the countryside to the cities, they had

little choice but to accept the subsistence wages offered to them in the mills and factories. The alternative was starvation. There was an abundant labor supply and its cost was kept at a minimum" (Rubenstein 1978: 55).

Even though there are criticisms, bureaucracy remains an important administrative system. Weber recognizes the ideal benefits of bureaucracy.

<http://www.dailyfinance.com/article/gates-says-urgent-need-to-cut-defense/1052189/>

<http://www.paperarticles.com/2009/06/singapore-at-50-managing-change.html>

According to the newspaper, " Singapore at 50: Managing change" gives a good example of efficient bureaucracy which helps to increase economic.

<http://www.uow.edu.au/~bmartin/pubs/90uw/uw08.html>

it provides the possibility for government to function effectively and efficiently, leading the larger and larger societies, with increasingly complex and diverse ways of life for its citizens. Beyond government, numerous other social organizations, both in the public and private sectors have developed bureaucratic forms of leadership, which have succeeded in advancing the goals of their organizations.

<http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Bureaucracy>(good thing, bad thing)

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