

Year 13 Sociology – Marxism

Karl Marx
(1884)



Marx (alongside his sometimes cowriter and friend, Friedrich Engels) argued that society is split into two classes: the Bourgeoisie (ruling class) and the Proletariat (working class). The Bourgeoisie have economic power, through their economic power they control society and the institutions in it. They also force the proletariat to work for a living.

As there are more of the working class than the ruling class, they cannot control the working class through force but instead by controlling their ideas and convincing them that their position in society is natural and earned.

This is called false consciousness – when working class people believe that their exploitation in society is fair and legitimate.

In the 1970s Neo-Marxists argued that while Marx's theory about the division of society is correct, his idea of revolution is not appealing to the majority of people. Instead of supporting radical revolution, the best way to achieve change is to slowly achieve change over a number of years through democratic methods.

They also argue that Marx is overly focused on the economic ways in which the ruling class dominate the working classes but that he ignores the ways in which they culturally dominate them (labelling as chavs, mocking working class culture)

They also argue Marx's theory is from the 1800s when people largely worked in factories but needs to be adapted for the 21st Century where people largely work office or creative jobs

Neo-Marxism
1970-now



Proletariat	The working class of society
Bourgeoisie	The ruling class of society
Ideological Control	The way in which the ruling classes control the working classes through controlling and manipulating their ideas.
False Consciousness	When the working classes believe that their position in society is natural and fair
Communism	An alternative to capitalism, when the majority of property is owned by the community/society. In communist society, each person will receive everything they need for a reasonable existence

Education
Bowles and Gintis (1976) & Willis (1977)

- **Bowles and Gintis (1976)** identify the 'correspondence principle' the way in which schools mirror and prepare people for a life of exploitation in the workplace. This creates 'obedient and docile' workers.
- **Willis (1977)** focuses on working class boys often are in anti-school subcultures where it is cool to 'mess about'. Boys gain status by misbehaving in class. Many boys believe that education is not for them and give up.
- However, this leads them to a life of manual labour, low paying jobs.

Family
Eli Zaretsky (1976)

- Zaretsky argued that family life gave proletarian men something they could control and a space where they could be the "boss". This provided a clear function for capitalism because it meant that workers would tolerate the powerlessness and frustration of being exploited at work because they had this private domain where they were "king of the castle" and could take out their stress and frustrations.
- This ties in with Fran Ansley's Marxist-feminist perspective of women being the "takers of shit"

Media
Milliband (1972) & Neo-Marxism

- Instrumental Approach – Milliband (1972)
- Media is controlled by the ruling class owners of media who use it to spread pro-capitalist ideology and ignore stories/ideas that criticize capitalist society.
- Hegemonic Approach – Neo-Marxism
- The ruling classes do not have the time to control every newspaper, news show, magazine or website. Instead they hire middle class editors who share their views to control these for them.

Crime
Chambliss (1978)

Capitalism is Crimogenic – This means that the Capitalist system encourages criminal behaviour.

- Crime is a 'rational response to the competitiveness and inequality of life in capitalist societies'
- Laws are designed by the ruling classes in order to protect their interests.
- This is why Blue Collar Crimes are always caught and punished whereas some White Collar Crimes are not even illegal

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Comprehension Questions

1. Explain Chambliss' theory of criminogenic capitalism
2. Explain the term false consciousness
3. Explain the term Bourgeoisie
4. Give 3 examples of ways in which the ruling class may dominate the working class
5. Who is Karl Marx? Where and when was he born?
6. How do Neo-Marxists criticise traditional Marxism?
7. Which two Marxist theorists focus on the education system?
8. How does Zaretsky criticise the nuclear family?
9. Outline Miliband's instrumental approach to media
10. How is Zaretsky's ideas on the family similar to those of Ansley?

Revision Task

Create a revision mind map for each of the two forms of Marxism

In your mind map you should outline the viewpoint of Marxism and Neo-Marxism in relation to the education system, the family, the media and crime.

Marxism and Neo-Marxism Comparison

Create a table outlining the similarities and differences between Marxism and Neo-Marxism.

Exam Practice Question

Have a go at these exam practice questions. Make sure to give it to your teacher so they can mark it for you.

Outline and explain two ways in which the family may be seen to reproduce class inequalities
[10 Marks]